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# ISLAM UNDER THE KHALIFS OF BAGHDAD

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# PREFACE.

"Islam under the Khalifs of Baghdad" is a continuation of the work I published in the spring of last year, entitled "Islam under the Arabs." It constitutes the second in a series of three, the last of which will be devoted to a history of "Islam in India." The series, as a whole, may be regarded as an attempt to discover the veritable character of Islam, by an investigation of its actual results in the countries dominated by its influence. I little thought, when I resolved to undertake this long and difficult task, that I should publish the results of my labours at a time when the character of Islam was the subject of such passionate debate as it is at present. In one way this may be of advantage to my book. It may have the effect of obtaining for it a greater degree of attention than it otherwise would. But from another and more important point of view, it is distinctly disadvantageous. For the moment, my subject—a question of historical fact—is almost certain to be decided by the impulses of mere sentiment; and it is well nigh inevitable that by one party at least I should be denounced

as illiberal, prejudiced, and partial. I would therefore ask my readers to understand that the conclusions set forth in this book—be they right or wrong—have been in no way influenced by the "Bulgarian massacres," or Russo-Turkish war. They were formed and committed to writing many years ago; they are the result of a long residence in India, and of many years' study of Moslem history and literature.

But this question of the veritable character of Islam has been rendered needlessly obscure and difficult by another cause on which I should like to speak more at length. It has been mixed up with another question, which, in point of fact, has nothing to do with it. I mean the character of Muhammad.

The character of Muhammad is, of course, a problem of great interest and no small difficulty. It has been approached by different writers from different standpoints; and different theories have, in consequence, been started to account for it. In all these theories there are, probably, certain elements of truth; and none, we may be certain, which are not defective and insufficient. But the inner character of the Prophet has nothing to do with the practical consequences of Islam; and this for a very simple reason. Throughout the Moslem world his words and his acts constitute the standard of morality. The servant of Islam never thinks and never has thought of attempting to penetrate behind the recorded act or speech to the motive which might have inspired it.

In all the acts and speeches of the Prophet, the Faithful see but one and the same impelling spirit. Whatever Muhammad did, he did under Divine guidance. The Koran is not *his* composition, but the direct utterances of the Deity. The sayings of the Prophet handed down by tradition are not the sayings of a man, but Divine decrees recorded on "the Everlasting Table" before man and the world were called into existence. And so also with the acts of Muhammad. Whatever were his motives, none can deny that he had many wives, that he massacred the men of a Jewish tribe in cold blood, that he traded in slaves, that he had recourse to the secret dagger to rid himself of dangerous opponents. These acts, in the belief of the Moslem world, are in perfect harmony with the Prophetic character, and were wrought with the Divine sanction. In estimating the results of Islam, this belief, with the distorted morality resulting from it, is the important fact to bear in mind; the motives which impelled Muhammad are indifferent.

In much that has been written on Islam, this distinction has been disregarded; and writers who think highly of Muhammad appear to regard themselves as bound in logic and in honour to think highly of his religion also. But the broad fact which has to be accounted for, is the general decadence of the Muhammadan world. To whichever quarter we look—to Northern Africa, to Egypt, Arabia, the Ottoman Empire, Persia, or the Khanates of Central Asia—the same spectacle of decay and increasing decrepitude confronts us. There is no soundness in it, but wounds

and bruises and putrefying sores; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. It cannot be urged that Islam is not responsible for this state of things, on the ground that Islam is merely a religion, and not a system of government; Islam is both. Neither can it be urged, in defence of Islam, that this or that country has enjoyed transient periods of greatness and prosperity, notwithstanding its dominating presence. The very fact that these periods have left no lasting memorials behind them, in the shape of improved laws or civic freedom, furnishes the strongest proof that reform and growth are utterly alien to the enduring spirit of Islam. We are, in consequence, compelled to inquire if it be not in the scheme of life propounded by Muhammad that we must look for the reason of this melancholy sterility.

What, then, was Muhammad's explanation of his own teaching? It was briefly this—that the Archangel Gabriel came down from heaven, and revealed the Koran to him in the exact words in which he communicated it to his followers. He had nothing to do either with its composition, or the doctrines it contains. This assurance has been accepted by the Faithful in all ages. From this conception of the character of the Koran, it follows that the contents of the revelation are above the reach of human criticism. It is either in every part the voice of the Archangel, or none of it is. The proof of its Divine origin is the assurance of Muhammad to that effect, not the character of the revelation itself, when tested by the human reason and conscience.

Another characteristic of Islam is, that it professes to regulate the relations between man and man, as well as between man and God. It founds a society and a polity, as well as supplying the elements of a creed. This important fact has been passed over by most writers with a very inadequate sense of its far-reaching significance. Because Muhammad taught the doctrine of the unity of God, it has been too hastily concluded that he was a great moral and social reformer as well. But there is no charm in the abstract doctrine of the unity of God to elevate humanity. The essential point is the character attributed to this one God. Christ conceived of God as Love; He spoke of Him as building up a new society on the ruins of the old, of which love was to be the ruling principle, and sending forth His spirit into the hearts of men to guide them into all truth. Thus the regeneration of the moral life and the enlargement of the intellect were set forth as the primary objects of the one God. But Muhammad conceived of God as separated by an impassable gulf from the creatures He had made, and finding *His* ideal of human existence in the customs of the desert Arabs. To the end of time men were to venerate the black stone; to the end of time they were to practise slavery and polygamy, and believe in the doctrine of Fatalism. The last revelation had come down from heaven. The last Prophet had appeared among men. The Koran was the only and all-sufficient guide, and no change in its precepts was possible without the guilt of disobedience to a divine ordinance.

Islam, in fine, may be said to lay down these two propositions for the practical guidance of men: (1.) The idea of progress is impious, and should be eradicated from the mind. (2.) The knowledge of God is a fixed quantity revealed in a book; the mind of man has no capacity to attain to it, more or less. The elements of truth in the teaching of Muhammad imparted their soul-subduing power to all that was false and puerile in it. If Muhammad had not set forth with such convincing power the unity and majesty of God, it is possible that his disciples might not have received with unquestioning credence his decrees upon lesser matters. As it was, they were incapable of discriminating. The man, and the book which had taught them to worship the one God, could not be mistaken when they bade them also venerate the black stone, and consecrated the practice of concubinage.

Thus, the true, the false, the sensual, and the superstitious have been allowed to exist together in the creed of Islam, the latter choking and destroying the former. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link; and it is the veneration paid to a black stone, not that to the One God, which denotes the high-water mark of the moral and intellectual life of the Moslem world.

The prevailing impression of what Muhammad wrought in Arabia is, I fancy, something like this. He obliterated, as it were with a wet sponge, the pre-Islamite history of Arabia, by destroying the recollections of past feuds and welding the Arabs into a

single nation. Nothing could well be more opposed to the truth. The Arabs, at that time, were divided into two great branches—the tribes of Yemen, and the tribes of Modhar. For centuries before the appearance of Muhammad, these tribes had been engaged in interminable wars. Islam did nothing to efface these distinctions, or mitigate the bitterness of old hatreds. And the idea of political progress having been denounced as impious, it was inevitable that when the tide of conquest was stayed, the fierce and restless energies of the Arabs should find a vent, in the recommencement of old quarrels. This, in point of fact, was what actually occurred. All that Islam, on this, its political side, had done for the Arabs was to furnish them with a wider theatre of conflict. The battles which, in former times, had been fought behind the barrier of the desert sands, were now fought in the heart of Asia. These incessant civil wars occasioned the fall of the House of Ommaya. They were of the tribes of Modhar; the Persians sided with the tribes of Yemen against them, and drove them from power. The story of their ruin is told in my first volume.

All this time, however, the other cardinal doctrine of Islam—that the knowledge of the will of God is a fixed quantity—was working out its own peculiar results. Islamism, as I have already said, is both a religious creed and a social and political system. The assumption which underlies it is, that the whole life of man is subjected to rigid ordinances which can be discerned by the aid of revelation alone. Conse-

quently, in order to frame laws for a Muhammadan state, the qualities required were not knowledge of men and experience of affairs, but a retentive memory, in order to master the subject-matter of revelation, and an accurate knowledge of "pure Arabic," in order to understand the precise meaning of it. The law-makers of Islam were secluded men, who founded their claim to be received as legislators, on the ground that they scrupulously abstained from all participation in public affairs. The actual needs of men were unknown and disregarded by them; the letter of the Sacred Text was all in all.

This is the strange paradox which goes so far towards accounting for the unimproveableness of Moslem states. The practised politician, because he was a practised politician was regarded as unfit to act as a legislator; the recluse who knew nothing of the world, was for that very reason supposed to be the man best fitted to frame laws for its government.

The first part of the present volume, "The Church of Islam," devotes two chapters to an account of the building up of this inflexible theocracy; the last two chapters give an account of the efforts made by a few of the Faithful to escape from the prison-house in which they had been walled up, and the results of the attempts. The Orientalist will perhaps object that the chapter entitled "The Men of the Path," is a very insufficient account of Moslem mysticism. I am aware that this is so. But my purpose, in the present volume, is merely to exhibit the general tendency of the movement; its more detailed exposition I reserve

for "Islam in India." The fourth chapter, entitled "The Free-thinkers," and the whole of the second part, "The Supremacy of the Persians," tells the story of the curious struggle in the bosom of Islam, between the Rationalizing spirit and the spirit of Orthodoxy, terminating in the complete triumph of the latter.

The third part, as the title shows, traces "The Decline of the Khalifate," from its loss of temporal power under the tyranny of its fierce Turkish mercenaries, down to the destruction of Baghdad by Houlagou and his Mongols. Here, again, a few words of explanation are due to the student of Oriental history, to explain the meagreness of historical detail which marks certain portions of this section. I have passed over with only a cursory reference, all that period of Moslem history which extends from the murder of the khalif al Mutawakhil, to the founding of the Seljuk Empire—a space of nearly two hundred years. Why is this so? As originally written, this portion of my book contained twice as much matter as it now does. I had devoted two long chapters to a history of the acts of the Turkish mercenaries, and the reigns of the Bouide princes. But, on consideration, I thought it best not to print them. The purpose of my book is to write a history of "Islam," not a history of the "khalifs of Baghdad." A right understanding of Islam is in no way assisted or enhanced by compelling the weary reader to wade through a dreary series of wars and revolutions which have no more significance for us than the quarrels of wild beasts in

an antediluvian forest. Rather, it seems to me, its difficulty is greatly increased. The reader faints by the way, and gives up the attempt in despair. He prefers to remain in ignorance of "Islam" (which, after all, has, at no time, greatly inconvenienced him), if knowledge cannot be purchased except at so great a cost. The Crusades, also, are beyond the purpose of my book. These were fraught with consequences of immense importance to Europe; but on "Islam," as a religion, they had no appreciable influence. The Crusaders came and went without modifying in the smallest particular, either the doctrine or the practice of the Moslem world.

For the full understanding of the chapter on "The Sect of the Assassins" I must refer my readers to the second part of "Islam under the Arabs." In that part, entitled, "The Fatimides," I have given a full account of the growth and development of the Shia doctrines, till they reached their culminating point in producing the sect of the "Assassins." Without some knowledge of this past history, the doctrine and practice of the "Assassins" are unintelligible.

As in my first volume, I have given my authorities at the end of the volume. But I take advantage of this opportunity to record how largely I am indebted to the learned and interesting works of Herr Von Kremer—his "Culturgeschichte des Orients unter den Chalifen," and his "Geschichte der Herrschenden Ideen des Islams." I have also derived much valuable information from a smaller work by Heinrich Steiner, entitled, "Die Mutaziliten." This work is remarkable

for a very able and exhaustive dissertation on the doctrine of "Predestination," as set forth in the Koran; and this dissertation has been my chief guide in what I have said on the same subject.

The first two chapters of this book appeared some time ago in the *Contemporary Review*, under the title of "Muhammadan Law: its growth and character." In rewriting them for the present volume, I have added many historical details and other matter which I thought inappropriate in a magazine article.

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11, MARLBORO' ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD,
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PART I.

# THE CHURCH OF ISLAM.

# CHAPTER I.

## THE FOUR ORTHODOX IMAMS.

A.D. 713—830.

THE religion of Islam has often been praised for its freedom from a complicated and cumbersome ritual. Wherever, it is said, the true Believer finds himself, on land or on the sea, alone or in company, that spot becomes, at the appointed hour, a temple, whence he can address his prayers to God. Hence, it has been supposed that the Moslem passes through life with an immediate consciousness of the Divine Presence, peculiar to men of his creed. This consciousness has survived the vicissitudes of history and the darkening effects of intellectual scepticism. Amid revolution, disaster, and anarchy, it is supposed to burn on with a clear and steady light, illuminating the bosoms of the Faithful in every part of the world, and binding all their hearts together. Therefore it is that all Islam is animated by a single spirit; that all its pulses vibrate in unison, and all its swords are ready to leap from their scabbards in obedience to a single call. Like so much which has been written upon the creed of Muhammad, these notions are directly the reverse of the truth. The intellectual immobility of the Moslem

world proceeds, not from an inner consciousness of the Divine Presence, but from the total want of it. According to the Moslem belief, the spirit of man is incapable of holding converse with the Spirit of God. Apart from the indications of His will contained in the Book and the Traditions, man neither knows nor can know anything about Him and His ways. All search, therefore, into the constitution of the universe or the mind of man, the Moslem condemns, at the outset, as certainly useless, and probably impious. And hence, also, there is no creed, the inner life of which has been so completely crushed under an inexorable weight of ritual. For that deep, impassable gulf which divides man from God, empties all religious acts of spiritual life and meaning, and reduces them to rites and ceremonies. They are laws to be obeyed. They do not imply that a way has been opened out between the visible and invisible world. Hence, also, there is not, nor ever has been, any "solidarity" in Islam. The resistless sovereignty of an inscrutable God has obliterated the notion of progress, and effectually prevented the idea of a national life from coming into existence. God is supreme; what He wills can only be known by what He brings to pass; and against His decrees, as manifested by the progress of events, it is idle to strive. Such is, and always has been, the political philosophy of the followers of Muhammad. To sketch the process of education which has achieved this result, is the object of the present chapter.

The Arab of Muhammad's day conceived of religion as altogether a ceremonial affair. He believed in a

God, and he believed that this deity had commanded him to perform every year the ceremonies of the Pilgrimage. But why had God done this? What pleasure could a rational Being find in these absurd and meaningless rites? What profit could they be to Him, or wherein lay their advantage to men? Such inquiries never entered the mind of the Arab. It was the will of God; and regarding the *why* and the *wherefore*, he never cared to speculate. The Prophet, a creature of his time if ever there was one, was as much a slave to this formalism as his countrymen about him. He no more than they felt the need of a logical connection between his speculative idea of God and the expressions of His character in the visible world. He never attempted to regard life as a whole, or to say to himself, If God be such an one as I have depicted Him, then this and that custom which prevails among men must be utterly hateful to Him. The Prophet knew of no life but the life of the desert Arab, and without further question he accepted that life as being modelled after the Divine wish. The Prophet knew of no religious life where the external rite was not deemed of greater importance than the inner state, and, in consequence, he gave that character to Islam also. Hence there are no moral gradations in the Koran. All precepts proceed from the will of God, and all are enforced with the same threatening emphasis. A failure of performance in the meanest trivialities of civil life involves the same tremendous penalties as apostasy or idolatry. In the Traditions, this moral confusion is even more startlingly apparent. These Traditions are a record

of the answers and acts of the Prophet in response to the inquiries of his followers; and those who have not studied them know nothing whatever of the true spirit of Islam.

They accumulated in this way. So long as Muhammad lived, the Faithful were in possession of a door communicating with the Throne of God. At this door they had but to knock, state their perplexities, and a response came to them from "The Lord of the Glorious Throne." As Muḥammad taught, and the Faithful believed, that the least transgression of the divine commands brought down the same punishments as the greatest, it is not strange that they availed themselves of this privilege freely. The Prophet accepted his position, as an essential part of the prophetic office, and never doubted of his capacity to make known the will of God regarding any matter submitted to his judgment. Thus the religion of Islam was gradually provided with an exceedingly rigorous and complicated ritual.

But the point to be noted is the extreme stress laid upon the accurate observance of this ritual. The mind of the Believer literally counts for nothing. No ardour of faith, no purity of intention, can make up for a ceremonial defect. There was a right way and a wrong way of performing all religious acts whatsoever; and the Arab could not conceive that aught was indifferent or optional. "I asked Ayesha," said al Harith, one of the early Moslems, "did the Prophet read the Koran at night loud or low?" She said, "Sometimes loud; at other times in a low tone of voice." "Allah

to Akbar!" shouted the delighted inquirer. "Praise be to God! who has made religion so spacious and unconfined!"

That the amazement of al Harith, at the discovery of this "spacious and unconfined" freedom was by no means unnatural, will be apparent if I quote a few of the directions regarding Prayer: "When any one of you says his prayers, he *must* have something in front of him; but if he cannot find anything for that purpose, he must put his walking-stick into the ground; but if the ground be hard, then let him place it lengthways before him; but if he has no staff, he must draw a line on the ground; after which there will be no detriment in his prayers from anyone passing in front of it." This passing in front of a man is a terrible crime, and exceedingly detrimental to prayer, though it does not altogether nullify it. The Prophet empowered a Believer annoyed in this way to "draw his sword" upon the intruder, and "cut him down;" and further declared that if "a passenger did but know the sin of passing before a person employed in prayer, he would find it better for him to sink into the earth." Equally important is the manner of performing the ablutions previous to prayer. When the Prophet performed these, "he took a handful of water, and raised it to the under part of his chin, and combed his beard with his hand, and said, 'In this way has my Lord ordered me.'" And on a certain occasion, when a party of his followers, performing their ablutions in a hurry, had omitted to wet the soles of their feet, the Prophet said, "Alas, on the soles of their feet, for they will be in hell fire!"

For sin, according to Muhammad, was a material pollution adhering to the body, and, like dirt, capable of being washed away. He enjoined upon his followers, in making their ablutions, to be careful not to allow so much as a finger-nail to remain dry, for, said he, "That person who makes ablution thoroughly will extract the faults from his body, even to those that may be lurking under his finger-nails;" and on the Day of Resurrection will be known by "his bright hands and feet," the effects of his frequent and conscientious washings. Not less important was the position assumed while praying. "Resting on the arms while at prayer is pleasing to the people of hell;" so also is "hurry in prostration like a cock pecking grain," and "spreading the arms like dogs and tigers." The safest plan in this, as in all other things, was exactly to imitate the Prophet. And this was accordingly done. The Prophet's gestures and attitudes during prayer were carefully noted down, and have been imitated by the Faithful ever since. The tradition rests on the authority of Ayesha, and is as follows:—

"The Prophet used to begin his prayers by repeating the *Tacbir*, and the reading of the Koran with these words:—'Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds!' And when he made the inflexion of the body called Rekat, he did not raise his head, nor yet bend it very low, but kept it in a middle position between these two, with his neck and back in a line. And when he had raised his head after inflexion, he did not prostrate himself, till after having stood quite erect, and after he had raised his head from one prostration, he did not make a stand without *sitting* up in the interval. And he used to lay his left leg down, and his right leg he kept up; and he . . . . . forbade resting both arms on the ground, and finished his prayers with the *salaam*."

Prayers also possessed varying degrees of merit; and these were precisely settled by the Prophet:—

"The prayers of a man in his own house are equal to the reward of one prayer; but in a *musjid*, being near his house, equal to twenty-five prayers; and if in the public *musjid*, equal to five hundred prayers; and in Jerusalem, equal to fifty thousand; and in my *musjid*, equal to fifty thousand; and in the Kaaba, equal to one hundred thousand."*

The same formal and legal character runs through the whole body of the Traditions. They are a collection of statutes which are supposed to embrace the entire sphere of man's daily activity. The object they strive after is to preclude the need of any appeal to the unassisted reason of man. The khalifs who succeeded the Prophet possessed merely an administrative power. They were the trustees and executors of a system already complete. They had no power to initiate new legislation, or depart from the letter of what was written. But whatever might be the number of Traditions, it soon became apparent that they could not meet and solve the needs of the great Empire which was won by the Faithful immediately after the Prophet's death. Multitudes of questions came up for decision for which no precedent was to be found either

* It is related of al Muzani—a disciple of as Shafi, so eminent, that that Imam said of him, "He is the champion of my doctrine"—that "when he missed being present at public service in the Mosque, he repeated his prayers alone twenty-five times, in order to regain the merits attached to those which are said with the congregation; in this he founded his opinion on the authority of the following declaration made by Muhammad: 'Prayers made with the congregation are five-and-twenty times better than prayers said by one of you when alone.'"—*Ibn Khall*, vol. i. p. 201.

in the Koran or the Traditions. What, under such circumstances, were the rulers and governors of the people to do? They had recourse to "the method of analogical deduction." This practice was authorised by more than one Tradition. When, for example, the Prophet selected Muad ibn Jabal as Governor of Yemen, and was about to despatch him thither, he said to him, "O Muad! after what manner will you judge?" He replied, "After the Book of God." "And should you find nothing there?" "After the rules of the Prophet of God." "And should you find nothing there?" "Then, by deduction, after the best of my judgment." Thereupon the Prophet lifted up his eyes to heaven, and exclaimed, "God be praised, who has given to His Prophet a messenger with whom he is well pleased."

Matters went on in this way until the murder of the khalif Ali. He is the last of the "rightly-guided khalifs." Such is the designation given to the khalifs Abou Bekr, Omar, Othman, and Ali. These four sovereigns had been the chief disciples and most intimate friends of the Prophet. They were acquainted with all that he had spoken or done; and they had entered into the thoughts and intents of his heart as completely as men could do. They were as zealous as their master himself for the dissemination and triumph of the faith. And, allowing for the inevitable frailty of humanity, they were not less watchful to keep it uncontaminated by heresy or unbelief. So long, therefore, as they presided over the destinies of the true Believers, the Moslem experienced a firm and satisfac-

tory assurance that he was being guided in the right way. There was, moreover, a prejudice against reducing the deposit of faith to writing. The Prophet had declared that Islam must be impressed upon the hearts of men; and the Arabs, interpreting this, as they did all else which proceeded from their master, in its literal significance, supposed it to be an injunction to learn their religion by heart, and eschew all other methods of preservation.

Nevertheless, so early as the khalifate of Abou Bekr, there had been a departure from the strict letter of this injunction. In the battle of Yemama, where Moseilama the Liar was killed, there had been a great slaughter of the Faithful; and among the slain were a large number of those who knew more or less of the Koran by heart. Such men were called Koran Readers. Omar was warned by this incident of the exceeding great peril in which the world stood, lest the sacred utterances should wholly perish by the slaughter of those in whose memory they were engraved. And he urged upon the khalif Abou Bekr the need of collecting the scattered fragments of the Koran into a book. At first the khalif was reluctant. It seemed to him a dangerous departure from the precedent set by the Prophet. "How," said he, "can I do the thing which the Prophet has not done?" But subsequently he perceived the wisdom of the advice, and entrusted the work of collecting the Koran to Zaid ibn Thabit, who formerly had acted as the secretary of the Prophet. And the latter "sought for the Koran from the leaves of the date, and white stones, and the hearts of men

who remembered it," till the whole had been collected and compiled into one book. So matters remained until the time of the khalif Othman. In his day a devout Moslem came to Medina, and presented himself before the khalif. His name was Hudhaifa. He was a valiant warrior, and had fought on the truth of God in Syria, in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and elsewhere; and he was shocked at the different ways of reading the Koran which he found prevalent among the soldiers of these armies. He now came to Othman to entreat him to "assist this sect, before they differ in the book of God, like as the Jews and Christians differ in their books." It was in response to this appeal that Othman caused to be made his famous recension of the text of the Koran. A copy of this he ordered to be sent to every quarter of the countries of Islam, and directed all others to be burned as inaccurate and misleading.

But when Ali was murdered, and the supreme power over the Faithful passed to the house of Ommaya, devout Moslems perceived that the purity of the Faith was in extreme peril. These khalifs represented the ascendency of that idolatrous Mekkan aristocracy, who, in heart, had never been converted to Islam. They knew nothing of the mind of the Prophet, and cared little to obey his precepts, even if they had known them. If, therefore, the Faithful were to continue to conduct their affairs according to the divine laws, measures must be promptly taken to make good the theological ignorance of these usurping khalifs. It is not surprising that this new movement should have

originated in Medina. The people of that city regarded themselves as, in a special sense, the depositaries of the true faith. They passed their lives in the midst of scenes which teemed with memories of the Prophet. There was the blessed mosque, wherein, for so many years, he had been wont to pray; there the houses wherein he had dwelt; there the grave in which his sacred remains were deposited. There was not a denizen of Medina who could not recall some speech or act of the Prophet wherewith to swell the sum of the Traditions, and remain, for all time, a light shining in the darkness. This spiritual glory became the more precious to the people of Medina when its political importance had been transferred to Damascus. Devout men applied themselves to learn by heart the Koran, and the Traditions, and the "analogical judgments" of the "rightly directed" khalifs. Pre-eminent among these were seven divines known in the after history of the Muhammadan world as "the seven jurisconsults of Medina." The fame of their learning went abroad through all the regions of Islam; and the khalifs, the governors of provinces, and all persons vexed with legal perplexities, who could do so, referred to them for counsel and advice. With the general consent of the Muhammadan world, they exercised the privilege of deciding, according to their own judgment, cases which could not be met by any of the existing sources of law. Thus the number of analogical judgments received an immense extension. And the mass of unwritten learning threatened to become too vast and amorphous even for the Arab's vast and tenacious memory, when the

inevitable systematiser appeared in the person of Malek ibn Anas.

Malek was a native of Medina. He was born A.H. 95 (A.D. 713-14), and he died A.H. 179 (A.D. 795), in his eighty-fourth year. The pious affection of his disciples has preserved many interesting traits of this celebrated divine. He was, so we are told, of a very fair complexion, inclining to red; tall in stature, having a large head, and the forehead bald; he wore clothes of those excellent stuffs which were, in those days, manufactured at Aden; and he disapproved shaving off the moustachios, holding it to be a sort of mutilation; he never changed the colour of his grey hair by dyeing it. He never, if he could avoid doing so, pronounced a Tradition when travelling, or when standing, or if he was pressed for time; "for I like," he used to say, "to feel the meaning of the Prophet's words when I repeat them to others." He had a regularly fixed ceremony, which he deemed incumbent upon himself to go through before giving utterance to one of these sacred sayings. He first made an ablution; he then seated himself in the middle of his mattress, and, spreading out his beard, he assumed a grave and dignified deportment; after which preparations he commenced. "I delight," he was wont to say, by way of explanation—"I delight in testifying my profound respect for the sayings of the Apostle of God, and I never repeat a Tradition unless I feel myself in a state of perfect purity." In accordance with the same spirit of veneration, he never made use of a horse in Medina, even when much enfeebled and

advanced in years. "No," he said, "I shall never ride in the city wherein the corpse of God's Apostle lies interred." This devout and excellent man passed his entire life in Medina, beloved and honoured by all. Once, and once only, does the peaceful tenor of his life appear to have been interrupted. In the reign of the second Abbaside khalif, Abou Jaafar, in A.H. 145, the city of Medina became the centre of a formidable Alide insurrection, which, for a time, placed the Abbaside khalifate in extreme danger. The Imam Malek took no part in this movement, but he was understood to have expressed an opinion that the descendants of Ali had a better right to the spiritual headship of the Muhammadan people than the descendants of Abbas. This opinion was necessarily noised abroad; and on the restoration of peace he was summoned before the governor of the Hejaz—an uncle of Abou Jaafar—and accused of having taught that the oath of allegiance to the Abbaside khalif was not binding upon those who had taken it. The governor was so highly incensed that he had him stripped, and after inflicting on him a severe flogging, caused his arm to be drawn out to such a degree that it was dislocated at the shoulder. But this martyrdom only increased the veneration in which the great Imam was held. And this esteem and affection were in no wise diminished when the infirmities of increasing age compelled him gradually to relinquish the moral and social duties which are considered obligatory upon all good Moslems—such as attendance at the Friday prayer, the paying of visits of condolence, and assisting at the interment of brethren who have

departed this life with the confession of Unity on their lips. His last moments are full of instruction. They show how profoundly he believed in the divine origin of the Koran and the Traditions, and how terrible was the thought that he might have interpreted these divine utterances amiss, becoming thereby to his fellow men a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. "I went," we are told, by one of his most eminent disciples—

"I went to Malek ibn Anas in his last illness, and saluted him. I then sat down, and perceiving that he wept, I said, 'O Abou Abdallah! what maketh thee weep?' And he answered, 'O Ibn Kaanaab! why should I not weep? and who has more reason to weep than I? By Allah! I wish I had been flogged and reflogged for every question of law on which I pronounced an opinion founded on my own private judgment. I had it in my power to abstain from doing so. O that I had never given opinions founded on my own private judgment!'"

The treatise composed, or rather dictated, by Malek ibn Anas is termed *Muwatta*, or "The Beaten Path." It was so called because it was founded on what he termed "the customs of Medina." These "customs" were the acts, commands, and prohibitions which were to be found in the Koran, or had been learned from the example and oral instruction of the Prophet. In other words, they constituted "the beaten path" along which it behoved the true Moslem to walk. What Malek effected was to arrange and classify under their appropriate heads, the immense mass of oral tradition which the remembrances of the Prophet, the teachings of the Traditionists, and the judgments of "the seven jurisconsults" had accumu-

lated at Medina. When thus arranged and classified, it formed a system of jurisprudence which embraced the entire sphere of human activity, and speedily came to be regarded as of equal authority with the Koran itself. It prevailed chiefly throughout Spain and Northern Africa. For its establishment in the former country it was indebted to the zeal of a man who merits special mention in a work like this, as a striking illustration of the intensity and character of the religious devotedness which Islam was fitted to evoke.

Yahya ibn Yahya was by birth a Berber, whose grandfather had crossed over the sea and settled in Spain. While yet a young man, he obtained a partial knowledge of "The Beaten Path," and this so moved his admiration, that he formed the design of proceeding to Mekka, and studying at the feet of the great Imam. This design he carried into effect at the age of twenty-eight; and the following incident obtained for him the special approbation of his master. He was, one day, at Malek's lecture with a number of fellow-students, when some one said, "Here comes the elephant!" All ran out to see the animal except Yahya, who remained motionless in his place. "Why," said Malek, "did you not go out and look at it? Such animals are not to be seen in Spain." To this Yahya replied, "I left my country for the purpose of seeing you, and obtaining knowledge under your guidance; I did not come here for the purpose of seeing the elephant." This reply so delighted the Imam that he ever after spoke of Yahya as "the intelligent man of Spain." Yahya studied under the dictation of Malek

until he had learned by heart the whole of "The Beaten Path," with the exception of some paragraphs which treat of "spiritual retreat." He then set out to return home; but when he got as far as the capital of Egypt, he met a fellow-disciple, who was occupied in making a written compilation of the doctrines he had learned from Malek. An examination of this work induced Yahya to return to Medina, and verify, by application to Malek, some of the matters recorded in it. He found Malek very ill, and stayed with him till he died. He made use of this interval to perfect his knowledge of "The Beaten Path;" and the last edition of that work was given orally by Yahya ibn Yahya. The great Imam being dead, Yahya returned to Spain. He took his master for his model in all things. In his appearance, his dress, and manner of sitting, he is said to have greatly resembled Malek; and he imitated him, also, in refusing to accept any office under the Government. This extraordinary abstinence made him extremely popular with great and small. He was the idol of the people; and the friend and adviser of the Sultan of Cordova.

"Never," writes a contemporary of his, "since the time of the introduction of Islamism did any of the learned enjoy such good fortune, such influence, and such a reputation as Yahya ibn Yahya. No kadi was appointed in any part of Spain, who had not first been designated by him; and as he nominated none but those who adhered to the system of Malek, the profession of that system very speedily became universal throughout Spain."

The causes of its spread in Northern Africa were different. Those who left Northern Africa to study the doctrines of their faith at some of the great centres

of learning, were naturally attracted to Medina, both by reason of its sacredness, and because it was the point nearest to their own homes. And there, finding the Malekite system universally received, they adopted it without inquiring further. It was, moreover, a system better suited to their simple methods of life than the more elaborate one of Abou Hanifa, of which and its founder we have now to give an account.

The Imam Abou Hanifa an-Noṃan was born in the year 80 (A.D. 699-700), and belonged to a noble Persian family. The city of Basra was his birth-place; and he made the pilgrimage to Mekka in his sixteenth year. He was a learned man, and a practiser of good works; remarkable for self-denial, piety, devotion, and the fear of God; humble in spirit, and constant in his acts of submission to the Almighty. He was, also, a handsome man, an agreeable companion, strictly honourable, and full of kindness to his brethren. He was rather above the middle height, and of a tawny complexion. No man spoke more eloquently than he, or with a sweeter tone of voice. The great work of his life was disclosed to him—as usual among good Muhammadans—through the medium of a dream. He dreamed that he was digging open the tomb of the Prophet, and having sent to inquire the meaning of this vision from an interpreter of dreams, he received the reply that "The person who had this dream will lay open a science never before discovered." The greater part of his life he passed in the city of Koufa. He achieved an immense fame by reason of his knowledge of the law, and the subtlety and acuteness he

displayed in applying the method of analogical deduction. Malek ibn Anas said of him, "He was a man of such talent that if he spoke of this pillar and undertook to demonstrate that it was of gold, he would do so, and adduce good proofs." Nevertheless, like all of the devoutest believers, he shrank from putting his legal knowledge to any practical use. The Traditions are numerous which set forth the responsibilities incurred by that Moslem who assumes the position of a judge or a divider between his fellow-men; and the terrible penalties awaiting the kadi who deviates from the straight path of strict equity. He—so said one of the Traditions—who shall be appointed judge over men, verily is killed without a knife. And on the day of resurrection there will come, even upon a just judge, such fear and horror that he will wish, "Would to God I had not ordered between two persons in a trial for a single date." For—

"There is no judge who orders between men, whether just or unjust, but will come to God's court on the day of resurrection, held by the neck by an angel; and the angel will raise his head up towards the heavens, and wait for God's orders; and if God orders to throw him into hell, the angel will do it from a height of forty days' journey."

Consequently, when Ibn Omar ibn Hobaira, the last Ommayide governor of the two Iraks, wished to appoint Abou Hanifa, kadi at Koufa, the latter refused to act. The emir, incensed at this opposition, ordered him to be daily flogged in public until he consented. Ten strokes of a whip were inflicted on Abou Hanifa, day after day, till the number had mounted up to one

hundred and ten, when finding the fortitude of the Imam still unvanquished, the emir set him at liberty. The Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal never spoke of this occurrence without being moved to tears, and invoking God's mercy on Abou Hanifa.*

When the Ommayas were overthrown, and the Abbasides came into power, Abou Hanifa was more than once in imminent peril of his life. He had incurred the enmity of some favourite courtiers of Abou Jaafar, who had resolved upon his destruction; and but for the Imam's quickness of retort would, in all probability, have effected it. The story is told by Abou

* The following anecdote is worth quoting as an example of the feelings occasioned by these and similar traditions; and also as a curious picture of Moslem manners, and habits of thought. When Omar ibn Abd al Aziz was khalif, he wrote to Adi ibn Arta, who acted as his lieutenant in Irak, ordering him to effect a meeting between Iyas ibn Muawia and al Kasim ibn Rabia al Harashi, and authorising him to appoint the most acute minded of the two kadi at Basra. The meeting having taken place, Iyas said to Ibn Arta: "O emir! ask the two great doctors of Egypt, al Hasan al Basri and Muhammad ibn Sirin, their opinion of al Kasim and me;" for al Kasim went often to see them, while he, Iyas, did not. Al Kasim (being equally unwilling to fill the place of kadi, and aware that these two doctors would advise the emir to name him) said, "Make no inquiries respecting me or him, for I solemnly aver by the only true God, that Iyas ibn Muawia is an abler jurisconsult than I, and knows better the duties of a kadee. If what I say be false, you cannot legally appoint me, because I am a liar; and if my declaration be true, it is incumbent on you to receive it, and act by it." On this, Iyas said, "O emir! you set a man on the brink of perdition, and he escapes the dangers which he apprehends by making a false oath, for which he will implore God's forgiveness." "Since you perceive that," replied Adi ibn Arta, "you art fit to fill the place," and he appointed him accordingly. —*Ibn Khall. Biog. Dic.*, vol. i. pp. 233, 234.

Yusuf, a disciple of the Imam's. Abou Jaafar al Mansour sent for Abou Hanifa, on which the chamberlain ar-Rabi, who bore great ill-will towards the latter, said, "Commander of the Faithful! this Abou Hanifa maintains an opinion contrary to that which was held by Ibn Abbas, your ancestor, who said that when a man takes an oath, and puts restrictions to it one or two days after, his restrictions are valid. Now, Abou Hanifa teaches that restrictions are not valid unless announced simultaneously with the oath." On hearing this, Abou Hanifa said, "Commander of the Faithful! ar-Rabi now asserts that the oath of fidelity towards you which was taken by your troops may not be binding." "How so?" said the khalif. "Because," answered Abou Hanifa, "when they went back to their dwellings they might have made such restrictions as rendered their oath null." Al Mansour laughed, and said to ar-Rabi, "I advise you to avoid hereafter attacking Abou Hanifa." When the latter retired, ar-Rabi said to him, "You meant to bring about the shedding of my blood." "No," replied Abou Hanifa, "but you meant to bring about the shedding of mine, and I saved not only myself, but you."

The second attempt on the life of the Imam was as follows:—Abou'l Abbas, a courtier, bore great ill-will to Abou Hanifa, of which the latter was well aware. One day, on seeing him enter into al Mansour's presence-chamber, where there was a numerous assembly, Abou'l Abbas said to himself, "I shall have his life taken this very day." He then turned towards him, and said, "Tell me, Abou Hanifa, if a man be

ordered by the Commander of the Faithful to behead another man, without knowing anything about his conduct, is it lawful for him to obey?" Abou Hanifa answered, "Tell me, Abou'l Abbas, does the Commander of the Faithful order what is right or what is wrong?" The other replied, "He orders what is right." "Well," said Abou Hanifa, "let right be done, and no questions asked." He then said to those who were near him, "That man thought to have cast me into bonds, but I shackled him."

His quickness of retort had delivered Abou Hanifa on these two occasions, but he was destined to succumb at last to the tyranny of the khalif. When al Mansour had completed the building of Baghdad, that nothing might be lacking to complete the glory of the new capital of Islam, he determined to appoint the great jurisconsult of Irak as kadi over the city. The Imam pleaded unfitness as a reason for declining the office. "You lie," said the khalif; "you are fitted for it." Abou Hanifa replied, "You have now decided in my favour and against yourself; is it lawful for you to nominate a liar as a kadi over those whom God has confided to your care?" But the retort here availed the aged Imam nothing. The khalif shut him up in prison, where after a lapse of six days he died, A.H. 150, A.D. 767.

Abou Hanifa was the father and teacher of those celebrated legists known in Muhammadan history as "the Jurists of Irak." He differed from Malek ibn Anas, in that he made almost no use of Traditions as a source of law, admitting only eighteen of these as

authorities in his system. His jurisprudence was founded exclusively on the Koran, and claimed to be logically developed therefrom by the method of analogical deduction. This difference is accounted for by the difference of their circumstances. The Imam Malek lived surrounded by memories of the Prophet. He was the member of a society whose wants Muhammad had had specially in view in the decisions which had proceeded from him. Malek, therefore, naturally enough, built up his system out of the abundant materials thus provided for him, and could not have done otherwise. Koufa, on the contrary, was a city which had not been founded till after the death of the Prophet. It was a great centre of commerce, and a meeting for men of diverse tongues and various modes of life. In Irak, Syria, and Egypt, the wild Arab conquerors came into contact with an old and complex civilization. This civilization, as soon as actual fighting had ceased, they did not systematically and persistently endeavour to extirpate. This seeming moderation has, by modern writers, been frequently credited to the Moslem conquerors as the result of an enlightened toleration. It was, in truth, due to nothing of the kind. The Moslem never supposed he had anything to learn from these infidels, whom he contemptuously permitted to live. The only right way of living was the way of living revealed in the Koran; and all who followed another path were indubitably reserved for the abyss of hell fire. The conquered peoples were merely his bondmen, who must labour that he might be fed and live at ease. They could

advance no claim upon his forbearance or justice on the ground of a common humanity. They had no rights, either civil or religious, except such as were to be found laid down in the Koran. At the first stirrings of rebellion on their part, these rights disappeared; and the precept of the Koran came into operation, which ordered that the Faithful should strike off the heads of the unbelievers and make a great slaughter of them. Consequently, on the most insignificant pretexts, non-Muhammadan races have always been liable to be savagely slaughtered by their Moslem masters. The latter feel no more compunction in acting thus than in crushing a fly. There is, indeed, a saying reported of the Prophet, that "if God valued this world at the wing of a fly, He would not allow an unbeliever to obtain so much as a drink of water from it." Whether the saying be authentic or not, the fact of its existence is a proof of the fierce intolerance of Islam. But so long as a subject people is submissive and yielding to the exactions of the conquerors, the Moslem feels no call to persecute them to the death on the ground of their religion. It suffices to deprive them of all political privileges, to subject them to a constant sense of degradation; their unbelief, he is contented to know, will be adequately punished in the world to come.

In the first period of conquest, more than this was forced upon the conquerors. Their notion of government was, it is true, rigidly confined to the exaction of tribute; but even for this, administrative machinery was requisite, and the construction of such machinery

was a work altogether beyond their capacity. They had, therefore, to depend upon members of the subject races to make good their own ignorance and inexperience. Multitudes of converts, also, swelled the ranks of the new creed, attracted partly by self-interest, but more by genuine conviction kindled by the spectacle of its victorious strength. These new-comers, familiar as they were with the laws of Justinian, at once recognized the impossibility of providing for the needs of a vast Empire out of the crude and elementary legislation contained in the Koran. At that time they were debarred from enlarging this scanty supply by having recourse to Traditions, as the collection of these had not extended beyond Medina. The laws they required must, in some way or other, be obtained from the Koran, or they would carry no authority with them. In this dilemma they seized upon the principle of analogical development, and applied it to the sacred volume. The vast code of laws which prevailed throughout the territories of the Christian Emperor, was affirmed by Greek jurisconsults to be merely a growth from a much simpler stock—the Laws of the Twelve Tables. What could thus be affirmed of the Laws of the Twelve Tables, must assuredly be equally true of the Word of God. In the Koran there was to be found a solution for every difficulty that could arise between man and man. This was manifest from a multitude of texts; as, for example, the following—"For to that we have sent down the Book, which cleareth up everything" (Sura xvi. 91); and again, "Nothing have we passed over in the Book" (Sura v.

38); "Neither is there a grain in the darknesses of the earth, nor a thing green or sere, but it is noted in a distinct writing" (Sura v. 59). There could be no mistake, so thought the Faithful, as to the meaning of these texts. They asserted in the most emphatic manner, that everything that could happen, had been anticipated and provided for in the Koran. It had been noted down in a distinct writing. Either then, there was to be found a false statement in the Koran —which was obviously impossible—or the Muhammadan divines had not discovered the right method of interpreting the sacred book. They had, in fact, failed to employ the principle of analogical deduction. The Book of God, in laying down any proposition whatever, established not merely the validity of that proposition, but also the validity of every proposition that could be logically deduced from it. Thus, it was written in the Koran, "Honour thy father and thy mother, and cause them no displeasure." Here the injunction to honour clearly implied that to dishonour or disobey was a sin; and as in the Koran all breaches of the divine laws carried with them an appropriate punishment, the due punishment for this breach must, as it was not specially provided for in the Koran, be found analogically. Taking this principle as a basis, Abou Hanifa spun out a complete legal system. His own teaching was oral; and it was by his disciples that his doctrines were incorporated in formal treatises. It was this system of jurisprudence which prevailed at Baghdad during the era of the Abbasides; and it is to this day the most widely spread of the four orthodox systems. The

merit of logical fearlessness cannot be denied to it. The wants and wishes of men, the previous history of a country—all those considerations, in fact, which are held in the West to be the governing principles of legislation, are set aside by "the legists of Irak," as being of no account whatever. Legislation is not a science inductive and experimental, but logical and deductive. It is built up from what may be termed, certain legal axioms which have been divinely revealed; and whatever can be logically deduced from any proposition to be found in the Koran is to be considered as an integral part of that proposition. Thus, there is a verse in the Second Sura which says, "God has created the whole earth for *you*." According to the Hanifite jurists, this text is a deed of gift which annuls all other rights of property. The "you" means, of course, the true Believers; and the whole earth has been created for their use and benefit. The whole earth they then classify under three heads:—(1) land which never had an owner; (2) land which had an owner and has been abandoned; (3) *the persons and the property of the Infidels.* From this third division the same legists deduce the legitimacy of slavery, piracy, and a state of perpetual war between the Faithful and the unbelieving world. These are all methods whereby the Moslem enters into the possession of his God-given inheritance. The Hanifite system of jurisprudence starts with this proposition; and it furnishes a very good illustration of what I have just said on the subject of Muhammadan toleration. The Moslem does not persecute a Christian on account of his religion, because the difference of

religion makes the latter his slave. This single fact throws a startling light on the causes of the decadence of the Muhammadan world. Since the death of the Prophet, Islam has not been a religion, so much as a barbarous code of laws which consigns those who reject them to hopeless political servitude, and scornfully rejects all thought of improvement from within. Wherever the Muhammadan conqueror penetrates, he enforces this code in all its unmitigated barbarism. All new converts are tied down upon this Procrustean bed, and whatever in thought, feeling, or conviction lies beyond its limits is ruthlessly cut away. It has been urged in praise of Islam that it has proved more potent than Christianity in eradicating national differences, and imposing upon all its votaries a single type of character. Precisely this has been the reason of its baneful power. It achieves uniformity, because intellectual and moral stagnation follow in its wake. It destroys diversities of character, because these are the result of life and growth; and within the sphere of Islam life and growth are impossible. There is a dismal identity in the decrepitude and corruption existing in all Moslem lands which points unmistakeably to a common parentage.

Of Abou Hanifa and his jurisprudence it was said that the world would never have heard of either but for the abilities and zeal of the kadi Abou Yusuf, the most eminent of his disciples. He first composed works on the foundations of jurisprudence according to the Hanifite system, and from the high favour he enjoyed at the court of the khalif Haroun al Rashid

made that system the prevailing one in Muhammadan Asia. He was born in a humble station of life, and gave the following account of his early relations with Abou Hanifa :—"My father died leaving me an infant in my mother's arms. Some time after, she put me to service with a fuller, and I used to leave the shop of my master and go to Abou Hanifa's class, where I would sit down and listen. My mother sometimes came, took me by the hand, and led me back to the fuller. My assiduity in attending Abou Hanifa's lessons, and my zeal for acquiring knowledge, interested him in my favour. My mother finding at length that these escapades of mine were too frequent and too long, said to him, 'You alone are the ruin of this boy; he is an orphan possessing nothing; I procure him food with the produce of my spindle, and my sole hope is that he may soon be able to gain a penny for his own use.' Abou Hanifa answered her in these terms: 'Go away, you silly, talkative woman! your son is here learning how to eat *falûdaj** with pistachio oil.' On this she turned away from him, and went off saying, 'You are an old dotard, and have lost your wits.'"

From that time the future kadi was a regular and attentive attendant at the great jurisconsult's class. Abou Hanifa recognized his abilities, and assisted him both with his encouragement and his money. On one occasion, Abou Yusuf was taken so dangerously ill that fears were entertained of his life. Abou Hanifa went to visit him, accompanied by some friends; and on retiring, he put down his hand on the threshold of

* A cake or hard paste made of almonds and honey.

the door, and said, "If that youth die, the most learned of those who are on that"—pointing to the ground—"will disappear." Abou Hanifa was a speculative jurisconsult, and nothing else. As I have already said, he obstinately resisted all endeavours, on the part either of khalifs or emirs, to put his legal knowledge to any practical use. And he cared so little for the history of Islam and the Prophet, that Abou Yusuf himself said of him that if he had been asked which battle took place first, Bedr or Ohod, he would have been unable to give an answer. This indifference is to be ascribed partly to his Persian origin. Abou Yusuf was an Arab; and he extended his studies far beyond the principles of jurisprudence; so that on arriving at man's estate he knew by heart the explanations of the Koran, and the "battle-days" of the Arabs, and was deeply versed in Traditional lore as well. Law, it was said, was the science of which he knew least.

His introduction to the khalif Haroun al Rashid occurred in this way. A certain military chief, who was afraid of having committed a perjury, was looking about for a *mufti* whom he might consult in the matter. Abou Yusuf, having been brought to him, declared that the oath was not infringed; and the officer bestowed on him some gold pieces, and procured for him a house near his own. Some days after, the officer went to visit al Rashid, and finding him in low spirits, asked him the cause of his sadness. The khalif replied that he was afflicted about a religious matter, and desired to consult some one skilled in the knowledge of the law. The officer at once recommended Abou Yusuf, who was sent

for; and the interview which followed is thus related by him:—"When I entered the alley which lies between the two lines of houses forming the khalif's residence, I saw a handsome youth of a princely appearance, confined in a chamber. He made signs to me with his finger, as if asking me to assist him, but I did not understand what he wanted. When I was brought into the presence of al Rashid, and stood before him, he asked me my name, and I answered, 'Yakoub. May God favour the Commander of the Faithful!' 'What say you,' said he, 'of an Imam *(khalif)* who saw a man commit adultery? Must he inflict on him the punishment fixed by law?'* I replied, 'No.' When I pronounced that word, al Rashid prostrated himself on the floor; so it struck me that he had seen a member of his family committing that act, and that the young man who made signs to me was the guilty person. Al Rashid then asked me on what authority I had pronounced my decision, and I answered, 'From those words of the Prophet—*Reject the application of penalties in cases of doubt.* Now in this case there is a doubt which suppresses the penalty.' On this al Rashid said, 'How can there be a doubt since the act was seen?' I answered, 'Seeing is not more effective than knowing for authorizing the application of a penalty; and the simple knowing of a crime is not sufficient to authorize its punishment. Besides, no one is allowed to do justice to himself, even

* An adulterer cannot be punished unless four witnesses declare that they saw him in the act. Here the question is, if the khalif, as chief of the religion, had the right of inflicting the punishment, because he witnessed the commission of the crime.

though he knew that the right was on his side.' The khalif made a second prostration, and then ordered me a large sum of money. He told me also to remain in the palace, and I did not leave it till a present was brought to me from the young man, another from his mother, and others from persons attached to his service. That was the foundation of my fortune. I continued to remain at the palace, and one servant would come to consult me on a case of conscience; another to ask my advice; and I at length rose so high in al Rashid's favour that he invested me with the kadiship of Baghdad."

Abou Yusuf was the first who bore the title of *chief justice*, or "kadi of the kadis"; and he also was the first who established a distinctive dress to distinguish those learned in the law and theology from other people. He was even considered a trustworthy Traditionist, though it was objected to him that he was far too prone to set aside the Traditions in his legal decisions, and resolve points of law by means of (so-called) rational deduction, but which, in fact, destroyed the law, under the pretence of obeying it. Thus, upon one occasion, he was sent for by the khalif to find a way of escape out of the following legal perplexity. He found the khalif alone with one Isa ibn Jaafar. "I sent for you," said Haroun, "so that you might receive the declaration which I am going to make against this man who is here. He possesses a slave girl. I asked her from him as a present, and he refused; I asked him to sell her to me, and he refused. Now, by Allah, if he do not consent to my demand, I shall put him to

death." On this, Yakoub turned towards Isa, and said, "See what God has effected by means of a girl; you refuse giving her to the Commander of the Faithful, and are, therefore, reduced to this extremity." He replied, "You have spoken before knowing what I have to say. I am bound by oath to divorce my wife, to liberate my slaves, and to distribute to the poor all I possess, in case I sell that girl or give her away." Al Rashid then turned towards Abou Yusuf, and said, "Has he any means of getting out of that?" The kadi intimated that he had. "How so?" inquired the khalif. "Let him," was the answer, "give you the half of her, and sell you the other half; he will then have neither given her nor sold her." This was accordingly done, and both parties relieved from their perplexity. The ingenuity of Abou Yusuf was highly applauded; but the orthodox shook their heads in mingled displeasure and dismay.*

* There are numerous anecdotes of the khalif al Rashid and the kadi Abou Yusuf, which are exceedingly valuable, as pictures of manners, to the student of Moslem history. The following is too good to be omitted:—"Abd al Rahman was the kadi of al Mubarak. The kadi having learned that al Rashid was going to Basra in his barge with Abou Yusuf, requested the inhabitants of his village to speak in praise of him when the khalif and Abou Yusuf would be passing by. As they refused to do so, he put on his outside clothes, with a high peaked cap, and a black scarf thrown over it. He then went to the landing-place, and when the barge approached, he bawled out, 'Commander of the Faithful! we have an excellent kadi, a kadi of sterling worth!' From that he proceeded to another landing-place, and repeated the same words. On this, al Rashid turned round to Abou Yusuf, and said, 'The worst kadi on earth must be here! A kadi who, in the place where he resides, can find only one man to speak well of him!' Abou Yusuf replied, 'The Commander of the Faithful would be still more

A second Hanifite doctor, second—if indeed he can be called second—only to the kadi Abou Yusuf, was Muhammad ibn Hasan as Shaibani. He was born in the town of Wasit, where he passed a part of his youth, and acquired the rudiments of a knowledge of the Traditions. While yet a boy, he paid a visit to Mekka, where he saw the Imam Malek ibn Anas. He one day addressed to that doctor the following question: "If a man in a state of legal impurity sees water at the hour of prayer nowhere except inside the mosque, what ought he to do?" Malek replied that he could not enter the mosque. But pressed by the urgency of the boy, he turned towards him, and said, "And what is your opinion?" "I think," replied the other, "that he ought first to accomplish a dust purification, and then, having entered the mosque, purify himself with water." Astonished at the precocious wisdom of this solution, Malek inquired of what country the boy was. He pointed with his finger in the direction of Irak. The Imam, supposing him to mean Medina, said, "I know all the inhabitants of Medina, but I do not know you." "That is not the only thing which you do not know," said the boy, retiring. When Malek heard the country from which he came, his astonishment was redoubled.

surprised if he were told that it was the kadi who praised himself.' Al Rashid laughed heartily, and said, 'He is a clever fellow, and must never be dismissed from office.' From that time, whenever he thought of this kadi, he would say, 'That fellow shall never be deposed.' Abou Yusuf was asked how he could have nominated such a man, and he replied, 'He was for a long time a suitor at my door, complaining of poverty, and I therefore gave him an appointment.'"—(*Ibn Khall. Biog. Dic.*, vol. iv. p. 282.)

Later on, Muhammad ibn Hasan attended the classes of Abou Hanifa, and on the death of that great doctor, he studied under the tuition of Abou Yusuf. But very soon, becoming the equal and rival of his master in learning, the friendly feelings which had united them gave way to jealousies and open enmity. The immediate occasion of this enmity is said to have been given by the following incident. Every morning, when the kadi Abou Yusuf repaired to the khalif's palace, he found his road encumbered with a crowd of eager students, all hurrying in the same direction. He inquired whither they went; and on being told they attended the lectures of Muhammad ibn Hasan, he exclaimed, "What! is it possible that this man can attract so many auditors! But," he added, "should he die of chagrin, I swear I will make the barbers and pastrycooks of Baghdad as learned as he." He accordingly founded a school for instruction in jurisprudence. But his duties as kadi hindered him from effectually realizing his project, while his rival continued to deliver discourses in the midst of a numerous audience. So far, however, the rivalry between the two doctors had only redounded to the benefit of science. It speedily assumed a bitterer character. The reputation of Muhammad reached the ears of the khalif Haroun al Rashid, who desired to become acquainted with so eminent a divine. The kadi, fearing for his own court influence, entered upon a series of intrigues to hinder the khalif and his rival from meeting. These failed; but they had the effect of engendering a profound enmity between the doctors

which lasted through life. The khalif desired to appoint Muhammad to act as kadi. This he declined; whereupon the khalif flung him into prison, when, after a sojourn there of two months, he withdrew his scruples; and he continued to officiate as kadi till the day of his death (A.H. 189, A.D. 804), which took place about his fifty-fifth year.

Such was the ardour of Muhammad in the study of jurisprudence, that he frequently deprived himself of sleep, in order not to interrupt a work which had been commenced. The Imam Shafi relates that he, upon one occasion, passed the night in the same chamber as Muhammad, and seeing the latter in a reclining attitude, supposed him to be asleep. But on the morrow, after morning prayer, Muhammad avowed that he had, during that single night, deliberated on and decided more than a thousand propositions. The Imam Shafi held him in such high esteem, that he learned by heart his most important book, entitled "Developments;" and the Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal confessed to have obtained light from the writings of Muhammad on the obscurest and most subtle points of juristical science. Muhammad was of course seen after his death in a dream by one of his admirers. His disciple asked what reward he had received from the Almighty. "He has laden me with the benefits of His mercy, and His divine Word spake to me as follows: 'O Muhammad! if my supreme will had predestined you to the torments of hell, should I have enclosed in your heart the deepest secrets of the august science?'" It was then asked of the shade, what had happened to

Abou Yusuf. "He has," was the reply, "an elevated station in Paradise; but there is between us a distance equal to the distance between heaven and earth." "And Abou Hanifa?" "Oh!" he replied, "he has obtained the first station among the beatified denizens of the seventh heaven."

The writings of this jurisconsult are said to have numbered no less than a thousand. The greatest among these is the *Jami as Saghir*, the authority of which was such wherever the Hanifite system prevailed, that no man was considered worthy to be appointed to the office of kadi who had not thoroughly mastered its contents.

The third of the great Muhammadan jurists was the Imam as Shafi. He was a member of the tribe of Kuraish, and belonged to the family of the Prophet. As Shafi was born A.H. 150 (A.D. 767-68), on the day, it is said, on which Abou Hanifa died. He passed his youth at Mekka, when he learned the Koran by heart, as also "The Beaten Path." He then went to take lessons from the Imam Malek, who told him to go to some person who would repeat the *Muwatta* to him. The youth replied that he had already acquired a perfect knowledge of it. Delighted with this signal mark of youthful zeal and piety, the venerable Imam is reported to have said, "If any person is ever to prosper, it is this youth." In his forty-fifth year (A.H. 196, A.D. 810) as Shafi went to Baghdad, and having passed two years in that city, he returned to Mekka. In A.H. 198 he again went to Baghdad, and after a month's residence there, he set out for old Kairo,

where he remained till his death (A.H. 204, A.D. 820). As Shafi, we are told, "stood unrivalled for his abundant merits." He knew all that was to be known in those days: to wit, all the sciences connected with the Book of God, and the Traditions: the sayings of the Companions; their history; the conflicting opinions of the learned; the language of the desert Arabs, philology, grammar, and poetry. He had no heartier admirer than Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the fourth of the four great Imams. "Never," he said, "for the last thirty years have I passed a night without praying God's mercies and blessings upon as Shafi." "Whoever," said another eminent jurist, "pretends that he saw the like of as Shafi for learning, elegance of language, general knowledge, and solid information, is a liar. He lived without a rival, and on his death he left none to replace him!"

As Shafi was an eclectic. He first acquired a thorough knowledge of the systems of Malek and Abou Hanifa, and then built up his own from the materials obtained from both; leaning, however, more to the historical and traditional precedents of Malek, than to the deductive methods of Abou Hanifa. The chief seat of his system was Egypt, in the capital of which place he had passed so much of his life, and where his tomb was speedily considered a sacred spot by the Faithful, and much visited by devout pilgrims. But schools to teach the doctrines of as Shafi were also common in Irak, Khorasan, and the regions beyond the Oxus; and in all the great cities of Asia, the Shafite doctors shared with those of the Hanifite schools the privilege

of teaching and giving opinions on questions of law. There were also frequent meetings between the jurists of the rival schools in order to maintain and discuss their systems. These debates gave rise to a large mass of controversial literature, and engendered between the sects a deep and bitter hatred. The Persian historian, Mirkhond, has recorded a fact which shows how implacable the feeling had become towards the close of the khalifate. When the Mongols of Chengiz Khan appeared before the city of Rhe, they found it divided into two factions—the one composed of Shafites, the other of Hanifites. The former at once entered into secret negotiations undertaking to deliver up the city at night, on condition that the Mongols massacred the members of the other sect. The Mongols, never reluctant to shed blood, gladly accepted these proposals, and being admitted into the city, slaughtered the Hanifites without mercy. But the Shafites derived no benefit from this astute stroke of policy. A Mongol was an animal who thirsted for blood, as a famished shark for prey. The spectacle of so many Shafites sound and well very soon became intolerable. A few days after the surrender of the town the work of murder recommenced, and the streets of Rhe were piled up with the carcases of Shafites and Hanifites indiscriminately put to the sword.

The fourth and last of the great orthodox Imams was Ahmad ibn Hanbal. He was born either at Merou or Baghdad, in the year 164 (A.D. 780). He was a pupil and favourite of as Shafi, who said of him, when

leaving Baghdad for Egypt, "I went forth from Baghdad, and did not leave behind me a more pious man, or a better jurisconsult, than Ibn Hanbal." Ibn Hanbal, as we have seen, repaid this good opinion with an equal warmth of admiration. His own doctrines differed from those of as Shafi, in that he altogether discarded the principle of deduction, which he considered a profane interposition of merely human speculation in place of the divinely-revealed law. And so much importance did he attach to this difference, that he forbade his pupils to attend the lectures of as Shafi. Nevertheless, he was himself discovered by a disciple reverentially following upon foot as Shafi, who was riding upon a mule. Surprised at the seeming inconsistency, the disciple exclaimed, "O Abou Abdallah! you forbade us to frequent him, and you yourself are walking after him!" To which the Imam replied, "Silence! if I even kept company with his mule, I should profit by it."

Ahmad ibn Hanbal was a handsome man, of middle size, having his hair dyed of a light red colour with henna, and a few black hairs appearing in his white beard. In Baghdad, he had not his equal in learning and piety; and all the pious and good among the citizens of the great city came to him in their spiritual perplexities to seek for light and consolation. Baghdad was then at the very height of its transitory glory. The wealth of all the world flowed into its crowded bazaars. The khalifs lived in the midst of all that luxury and pomp which have since become proverbial. Their palaces, and the palaces of the great nobles,

blazed with gold and silver, and rang with the laughter of singing girls and the profane harmonies of musical instruments. But then, as always, luxury at one end of the scale produced an excessive asceticism and a puritanical spirit at the other. Living in poverty, in the remote lanes and alleys of the great city, were holy men and women, eager for the purity of Islam, and shocked by the corruption of the times. All such looked up to Ibn Hanbal as their guide and their preceptor. And the inquiries addressed to him are as a flash of light illuminating the recesses of this religious world.

Among the holy men of Baghdad was one Bishr ibn-al Harith, surnamed "the Barefooted." He had acquired his cognomen from the following circumstance:—The latchet of one of his shoes having been broken, he went for another to the shoemaker, who said to him, 'How full you are of worldly consideration!'" On this Bishr threw away the shoe he held in his hand, and kicked the other off his foot, making a vow never to wear shoes again. There is a remark recorded of this man, which was evidently prompted by the hard and shallow casuistry of the jurisconsults of his time. "The punishment of the learned man in this world is blindness of heart." Bishr had a sister, Mudgha, not less remarkable than himself, for the devout austerity of her life. Concerning her, the son of Ibn Hanbal relates as follows:—"A woman came in to my father and said, 'O Abou Abdallah! I spin at night by candlelight, and, as it sometimes happens my candle goes out, I spin by the light of the moon; is it

incumbent upon me to separate the portion spun by the light of the candle from that spun by the light of the moon?' To this my father answered, 'If you think there is difference between them, it is incumbent upon you to separate them.' * She then said, 'O Abou Abdallah! are the groans of a sick person a repining against Providence?' To which he answered, 'I hope not; it is rather a request addressed to God.' The woman then withdrew, and my father said, 'I never heard such a question made; follow her.' I followed her, therefore, and saw her enter the house of Bishr the Barefooted. 'You are right,' said my father;

* The meaning of this inquiry needs explanation. The Prophet required that from all the property belonging to a Moslem, a tenth should be set aside as the legal alms. The punishment for omitting to deduct this tenth from any part of his wealth brought down upon the offender a punishment which is thus described in a Tradition. "To whomsoever God gives wealth, and he does not perform the charity due from it, his wealth will be made into the shape of a serpent on the day of resurrection, which shall not have any hair upon its head, and this is a sign of its poison and long life; and it has two black spots upon its eyes, and it will be twisted round his neck like a chain on the day of resurrection; then the serpent will seize the man's jawbones, and will say, 'I am the wealth, the charity for which thou didst not give, and I am thy treasure for which thou didst not separate any alms.'" Another Tradition relates as follows:—"Verily two women came to the Prophet, each having a bracelet of gold on her arm, and the Prophet said, 'Do ye perform the alms for them?' They said, 'We do not.' Then the Prophet said to them, 'Do you wish that God should cause you to wear hell fire in place of them?' They said, 'No.' Then he said, 'Perform the alms for them.'" Now, in the case of the sister of Bishr, the cotton she spun by the light of the moon would be spun at less cost than that which had the value of a candle expended upon it; a larger deduction, therefore, would have to be made from the price obtained for the former cotton, on account of the legal alms, than from the cotton spun by candlelight.

'it is impossible that this woman could have been any other than Bishr's sister.'"

The system of jurisprudence taught by Ahmad ibn Hanbal never extended to any great degree beyond the precincts of Baghdad, and is now almost wholly obsolete. It was, both in its theological and legal aspects, a reaction from the lax spirit of the age. The khalif Mamoun ruled at that time in Baghdad, and the authority of revelation was subordinated to the higher law of reason. The treasures of Greek learning and philosophy were, by means of translations, revealed to the admiring contemplation of the Faithful; and the logic of Aristotle was fearlessly applied to prune and shape the theology of the Koran into a system harmonizing with the voice of the conscience. The court jurisconsults were men of the school of Abou Hanifa. Many of them were notorious for their open and shameless profligacy; and by the extreme elasticity which the principle of analogical deduction acquired in their hands, they found no difficulty in making the rigid doctrines of the Koran connive at the most wanton excesses of arbitrary power, and pander to the licentious passions of khalifs and governors. Strict Muhammadans beheld these things with terror and perplexity. In the logical crucible of the scholastic theologians, it seemed as though, for the God of the Koran—that sublime and awe-inspiring personality—the Faithful were to rest satisfied with a vague and misty Theism. Under the elastic manipulation of the court jurists, all the divinely-revealed precepts of Islam were being replaced by the fantastic results of

human speculation. By both, the fundamental tenet of the Muhammadan faith was directly set at nought, and the mind of man placed on a level with the written word, as possessing an innate capacity for the discernment of truth. Unless this heresy was destroyed at its birth, the religion of Islam must inevitably perish, for resignation to the revealed will of God was incompatible with a right to criticise that revelation, and reject whatever was out of harmony with the criticising faculty. The battle against the theological rationalists I shall have to describe in a future chapter; that with the deductive jurisconsults is what I am concerned with at present.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal and his disciples perceived that from the Koran alone it was not possible to provide for the legislative wants of a great empire. Unless, therefore, they could supplement this by means of some complementary revelation, there was no escape from an appeal to the unassisted human reason. The jurisprudence of Malek ibn Anas was founded upon "the customs of Medina." The principle here was undeniably sound. A polity regulated by "the customs of Medina" would, in other words, be regulated by the example of the Prophet. But, unhappily, the practices which sufficed for a primitive Arab city did not suffice for the vast concourse of human beings which thronged the streets of Baghdad. Where, then, was to be found this supplementary revelation? In the Traditions. These, since the days of Malek ibn Anas, had increased enormously in number and importance; and from these the Imam conceived that a

complete legal system might be constructed, which, reposing, in every particular, on prophetic authority, would render the appeal to human reason idle and superfluous. To this conviction the Muhammadan world is indebted for those huge and laborious collections of Traditions—those melancholy monuments of misdirected energy and devotion, beneath whose tremendous weight, reason, thought, freedom, and progress have literally been crushed to death.

# CHAPTER II.

## THE TRADITIONS.

A.D. 632-870.

A "TRADITION" is a recital containing a sentence or a declaration of Muhammad regarding some religious question, either moral, ceremonial, or theological. The Muhammadan belief is, that before the Throne of God there stands a "preserved Table," on which all that can happen, and all that has ever entered, or will enter the mind of man, is "noted in a distinct writing." Through the medium of the Archangel Gabriel, the Prophet had access whenever he pleased to the records inscribed on the "preserved Table." Consequently, in all decisions enumerated by him, it was not he that spoke, but the word of God as written upon the everlasting Table. Likewise, so, in all his religious acts. His method of praying, his method of making ablutions, his method even of cleaning his teeth—in short, in all that he did, there was nothing arbitrary, nothing that resulted from mere human caprice. The Prophet was a divinely-revealed type and exemplar for the strict and faithful imitation of all his followers. The Traditions are the records of all that he said or did, orally handed down. Sometimes a Tradition contains a dis-

tinct injunction or prohibition; sometimes it merely preserves the account of an act by which the Prophet had attracted the attention of his companions; sometimes it records the guarded silence of the legislator with regard to certain cases presented to him—such silence being held equivalent to a formal approbation. The great Traditionists in the beginning of Islam were Ayesha, the favourite wife of the Prophet; the four "rightly-directed" khalifs, and six of the Companions known as "the Evangelists of Islam." These Traditionists transmitted their knowledge to their disciples—the *Tabis*, as they were called—and these to the next generation, and so on, as long as the practice of oral transmission continued. To prevent the manufacture of spurious Traditions, a number of strict rules were laid down. First in importance came, of course, the inevitable Tradition having reference to this very subject. "Whoever," so the Prophet was reported to have said, "shall relate, as from me, a saying which is not mine, may prepare a sitting-place for himself in hell-fire." To enforce this command, it was laid down that he who had learned a Tradition was under a solemn obligation when repeating it, to do so without adding to or taking from its contents in the smallest particular. Every Tradition, moreover, was to be repeated with its *isnad*, or chain of authorities, which attached it to its fountain-head, and vouched for its authenticity. A Tradition apart from this *isnad* was of no value. In order that the *isnad* be good, it was necessary that the names included in it should be those of men distinguished for integrity, piety, and a retentive memory.

It was also essential that the transmitters of a tradition should ascend in an unbroken line to the Prophet; and that the tradition itself should be free from anachronisms. But despite of all precautions, there soon sprang up a brisk manufacture of forged traditions, which, as years rolled on, assumed larger and larger dimensions. The verdict of an authentic tradition being admitted by all as final and decisive, the temptation to solve all difficulties by this simple expedient was too strong to be resisted. The earliest, and in truth, the heaviest offender was Abou Horaira, one of the "six evangelists." The traditions resting on his authority are much more numerous than those reported by any other person. The greater number of them are manifestly false. They consist of miracles worked by the Prophet, of wild legends regarding Antichrists, and the end of the world, the ride to Heaven on the beast "Borak," and other similar matters. Even the ready credulity of the Arabs appears to have been staggered by this extraordinary flow of knowledge; and his pupils ventured to inquire, how it was that he, who had not been one of the chief among the Prophet's friends, should yet know more than all of them put together. To this the veracious chronicler made answer as follows:—

"Verily ye say that Abou Horaira has related many traditions from His Majesty; but if I have related more or less, God will reward me for it at the day of resurrection. Verily, my brethren the refugees were prevented from attending His Majesty by tillage and their gardens, and by driving out their camels and goats; and I was a poor man always waiting upon His Majesty, and contented myself with that which assuaged my hunger. And I heard his

sayings, and saw his actions. His Majesty said one day, 'Whoever spreads his cloth for me, to pray for my sayings being remembered, and after that takes it, and presses it to his breast, never will forget any part of them.' Then I spread a blanket, which was the only thing I had upon my body; and His Majesty prayed upon it; after which I put it to my breast; and by God who sent Muhammad in truth, I have not forgot to this day what I heard His Majesty say."

There must have been many of the Companions and their disciples who knew that Abou Horaira was an egregious liar, and his Traditions fabrications. But no one cared or dared to question their authenticity; and the example set by so distinguished a companion and evangelist was, of course, eagerly imitated by others. Sunni, Shia, and Separatist—each of these sects with their subdivisions—supplied themselves with a collection of Traditions which confirmed and ratified their several doctrines. Certain eminent Muhammadans became specially notorious for their skill in the manufacture of Traditions. Among these was Mouhalleb, the great Arab general, who, after long struggles, succeeded in breaking the power of the Separatists. In these campaigns, the monotony of fighting was largely diversified by theological controversy; and Mouhalleb was continually confounding his opponents by the invention of Traditions, accompanied by all the external signs of authenticity, which emphatically condemned their opinions. This practice he defended on the authority of two Traditions—one which said that "war consists of stratagems and deceits;" and the other to the following purport, "Every lie shall be written down as a lie by the recording angels, with the exception of three: a lie told in order to

reconcile two men, a lying promise made by a man to his wife, and a lie in which a man engaged in war makes a promise or a threat." Another—a less known forger—confessed, before his execution, that he had thrown into circulation no less than four thousand forged Traditions. The desire to ingratiate oneself with the reigning khalif was also a very strong motive for the indulgence of this practice. Thus the following is related of the kadi Wahb ibn Wahb, whose forgeries were so notorious that Ahmad ibn Hanbal was wont to speak of him as "that liar." When the khalif Haroun al Rashid arrived at Medina, he abstained from ascending the Prophet's pulpit because he still had on him his travelling jacket (*kaba*) and sword-belt. The courtly kadi entreated him not to allow this to hinder him, and cited, in support of his advice, a Tradition to this effect—"Gabriel, on whom be the blessing of God, descended from heaven to the Prophet, and he had upon him a *kaba*, and a belt furnished with a sword."

Independently, however, of conscious mendacity, the immense accumulation of Traditions was in the main the result of simple gossip. It grew up in the great standing encampments of Persia, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, where, after the conquest of a province, the Arab tribes were drawn together to keep order and repel invasion. In these encampments, during the intervals of active service, the thoughts of men naturally reverted to the Prophet who had launched them forth upon this astounding career of carnage and conquest. Those who had seen the Prophet found

eager listeners wherever they went. The stories they related passed from lip to lip, losing nothing in the process of transmission; and so it came to pass that each of the great Muhammadan cities of Asia—Koufa, Basra, Damascus, Jerusalem, Meron, Herat—became possessed of a body of Traditions, which were handed on orally by masters to their pupils. But no attempt was made to sift and criticise this immense accumulation of anecdotes. Millions of Traditions floated amid the Faithful; tens of thousands of these were pure forgeries, and hundreds of thousands of them were contradictory. None knew how to discriminate between the true and the false, or how to ascertain the "abrogating" Traditions, from those which were abrogated by them. Abou Hanifa and the "legists of Irak" had proposed to get rid of the difficulty by setting aside the entire mass of traditional literature, and deducing their jurisprudence exclusively from the Koran. But the verbal quibbling and legalized immorality* in which their practice had resulted, had occasioned the strong reaction in favour of the Traditions, at the head of which stood the Imam Ahmad ibn

* I give an example by way of illustration. "Haroun al Rashid, having one day declared with an oath that he himself was one of those who were to enter Paradise, consulted doctors of the law on the subject. None of them opined that he was one of those persons, and, as Ibn as Sammak's name was then mentioned to him, he had him called in, and asked his opinion. Ibn as Sammak proposed to him this question, 'Had the Commander of the Faithful ever the occasion of committing an act of disobedience towards God, and abstained from it through fear of offending Him?' 'Yes,' said al Rashid, 'in my youth, I fell in love with a slave-girl belonging to a person in my service, and having once found a

Hanbal. "When," said one of the Imam's disciples, "the horseman of the Traditions gallops about in the hippodrome of contestation, the heads of analogical deductions are struck off and given to the winds." But, in order to provide "the horseman of the Traditions" with weapons that should not snap in the using, it was necessary that the great mass of Traditions should be collected, and by the application of a severe and searching criticism, the authentic separated from the spurious. This was the task which devout men now set before themselves as their life-work. Undeterred by the dangers and hardships of travel, they journeyed through all the provinces of the Muhammadan world—devoting twenty and thirty years of their life to this laborious enterprise—and made complete collections of all the Traditions they found among the people. These they then subjected to critical tests, discarding those which were wholly false, and rearranging the rest according to the degree of credibility attaching to each Tradition.

Abou Daoud Sulaiman, a member of the tribe of Azd, was one of the first of these devoted men. He

favourable opportunity, I resolved on committing with her the evil deed, but reflecting on the fire of hell and its terrors, and recollecting that fornication was one of the grievous sins, I abstained from the girl through fear of Almighty God.' 'Then, let the Commander of the Faithful rejoice! thou art one of those who shall enter Paradise,' said Ibn as Sammak. 'How,' said al Rashid, 'dost thou know that?' 'From the words of the Almighty Himself,' replied the other; 'He has said, '*But whoever shall have dreaded the appearing before his Lord, and shall have restrained his soul from lust, verily Paradise shall be his abode*' (Sura lxxix. 40). These words gave al Rashid great joy."—(*Ibn. Khall. Biog. Dic.*, vol. iii., p. 19.)

travelled through Irak, Khorasan, Syria, and Egypt; visiting all the principal cities, and taking down in writing the Traditions in use among the doctors resident in each of them. The book thus compiled he presented to the Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Speaking of this work, Abou Daoud said:—

"I wrote down five hundred thousand Traditions respecting the Prophet, from which I selected these, to the number of four thousand eight hundred, which are contained in this book. I have mentioned herein the authentic, those which seem to be so; and those which are nearly so; but of them all a man only requires four for his religious conduct—the first, those words of the Prophet, 'Deeds are to be judged by the intentions;' the second, 'A proof of man's sincerity in Islamism is his abstaining from what concerns him not;' the third, 'The believer is not truly a believer until he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself;' the fourth, 'The lawful is clear, and the unlawful is clear, but between them are things doubtful.'"

This excellent man was born A.H. 202 (A.D. 817-818), and died at Basra A.H. 275 (A.D. 889).

Another eminent Traditionist, contemporary with Abou Daoud, was Yahya ibn Maiu. He devoted his entire life to the collection of Traditions, and the sifting of the false from the true. His father had left him a fortune equivalent, in our money, to the sum of twenty thousand pounds. The whole of this he expended upon his life-work, and brought himself thereby to such destitution, that he had not a shoe to put on. He wrote down six hundred thousand Traditions with his own hand; and the relaters of Traditions are said to have written down for him as many more. Referring to these labours, he said, "I wrote down quantities of Traditions under the dictation

of liars, and made use of the paper for heating my oven. I thus obtained at least one advantage—bread well baked." On his death he left one hundred and thirty cases, and four water-jar stands filled with books. He was a great master in what was technically called, "The art of improbation and justification." This art had for object to determine the degree of credibility attaching to individual reporters of Traditions, by a close investigation of their lives, and the reputation they had acquired for good conduct, piety, veracity, exactness, and a retentive memory. A close friendship existed between Yahya, and the Imam ibn Hanbal, and they studied together all the sciences connected with the Traditions. The latter affirmed of his friend that God had created him for the purpose of exposing the falsehoods of lying Traditionists; and that every Tradition unknown to Yahya ibn Maiu might be regarded as false on that account alone. Yahya departed this life in his seventy-seventh year (A.H. 233). He had been at Mekka, and when returning to Baghdad, the city where he dwelt, he visited Medina, and abode there three days. He then set out once more with his fellow-travellers; but at the first halting-place he had a dream, in which he heard a voice calling to him, and saying, "O Abou Zakariya! dost thou then dislike my neighbourhood?" When the morning came, he said to his companions, "Continue your journey; as for me, I return to Medina." They did so, while he went back to the city, where he passed three days, and then died. His corpse was borne to the grave on the bier which had been used on

the occasion of the Prophet's burial; and a man preceded the funeral train, crying out, "This is he who expelled falsehoods from the Traditions left by the Prophet of God."

Among the pupils of Yahya ibn Maiu, there were two, upon whom his spirit descended in an eminent degree. They were Muhammad ibn Ismail al Bokhari, and Muslim ibn al Hajjaj. "I saw in a dream," we are told by al Bokhari, "the Prophet of God, from whom I brushed away the flies. When I awoke, I inquired from one skilled in the interpretation of dreams, the meaning of the vision. He said to me, "You shall keep lies from him." Thus encouraged, he set out from Baghdad, and journeyed to all the great cities of Khorasan, Irak, Hejaz, Syria, and Egypt, collecting traditional information from the doctors resident there. Sixteen years of his life were devoted to this pious work. "I never," he said, "inserted a Tradition in my collection till after I had made an ablution and offered up a prayer of two *rakats*." On his return to Baghdad, whither his fame had preceded him, the doctors and jurists of that city determined to put his knowledge to a severe test. They selected one hundred Traditions, and prefixed to each a wrong *isnad*. These they gave by tens to ten different persons, whom they directed to attend the conference held by al Bokhari, and submit to him these Traditions, and see what judgment he would pronounce upon them. When the appointed day came, a great number of Traditionists from Khorasan proceeded with those of Baghdad to the meeting. The assembly

having taken their places, the ten came forward one after the other, and questioned al Bokhari regarding the Traditions which had been given to them. He listened while he recited them, making no other answer to each but "I am not acquainted with it." But when the whole hundred had been repeated, he took up his parable, and affixing to each Tradition the correct *isnad* belonging to it, repeated the whole hundred in succession.* The assembly were filled

* Muhammadan history abounds with examples of the enormous value attached by Moslem divines to an exact and tenacious memory. The reason of this is explained at the close of the present chapter. Meanwhile, the following anecdote is a curious illustration of the fact, and serves also to exhibit the degree and kind of knowledge demanded of a good Traditionist. Abou Sulaiman Dawûd, an eminent jurisconsult, relates as follows:—"There came one day to my public conferences a native of Basra, whose name was Abou Yakub as Shariti. He was dressed in two ragged cloaks, and having advanced of his own accord to the place of honour, without being invited to take it, he sat down by my side and said, 'Question me about what you please.' As I was almost provoked by his conduct, I told him sneeringly to treat of cupping. He immediately invoked the benediction of God, and related the mode in which this Tradition had been handed down: *He who cups and he who is cupped in the month of Ramadan have broken the fast.* He then gave the names of the Traditionists who traced it up as far as the *Tabis;* of those who traced it up through an uninterrupted succession of narrators to Muhammad himself; of those who explained it; and of the jurisconsults who cited it as an authority for their doctrines. He then stated the various channels through which the following Tradition has passed down: *The blessed Prophet was cupped, and he gave the cupper his pay; and were cupping a thing forbidden, he had not given it to him.* He next related the different modes of transmission by which this other Tradition was received: *The Prophet was cupped with a horn.* He mentioned also other genuine Traditions respecting cupping, and some of *middling* authenticity, such as these: *I passed not by any band of the angels without their saying, Order thy people to use cupping.—The healing of my people is by three means: cupping,*

with admiration; and from that day his reputation and influence were secure. He became the great Imam of the science of Traditions, and ninety thousand persons are said to have attended his lectures and studied under him.

Al Bokhari was of Persian extraction, and his grandfather was the first member of his family who became a convert to Islam. Al Bokhari was born A.H. 194 (A.D. 810), and died A.H. 256 (A.D. 870). The collection of Traditions made by al Bokhari is known as the "authentic collection," and it is regarded as the highest in point of authority of the six books of Traditions which are accepted by Muhammadan orthodoxy. Out of a mass of six hundred thousand Traditions, he made selection of seven thousand two hundred as valid. But defects of method in the arrangement of his book rendered it so bewildering and difficult for purposes of consultation, that a fresh collection, on an improved and simpler plan, was undertaken and effected by his friend and fellow-pupil, Muslim. The learned among the Muhammadans, for all practical purposes, give the preference to this collection. They do so because the author has been careful to excise all "weak" Traditions, several of

*drinking honey, and cauterizing with fire,* and others of a like import. He then gave the Traditions of *feeble* authenticity, as, for instance: *Be not cupped on such and such a day; at such and such an hour.* After which he mentioned the opinions expressed by physicians of every age on the subject; and he concluded his discourse with the remark that cupping originated at Ispahan. I then said to him, 'By Allah! I shall never scorn any person again.'"—*Ibn Khall.*, vol. i., pp. 501, 502.

which al Bokhari had allowed inadvertently to remain in his work; and also because the headings of the chapters indicate more clearly the character of the Traditions grouped under each than was the case in the collection of al Bokhari.

All the men above mentioned were the friends and contemporaries of the fourth Imam. They are only a few out of many who might be named, as engaging in this laborious work of collecting and sifting Traditions. But they will suffice to prove what I said some pages back, that the system of Ahmad ibn Hanbal was the result of accidental circumstances. He himself was a diligent collector of Traditions, and composed a *Masnad* of authenticated Traditions more copious than any which had been made up to that time. He is said to have known by heart one million of Traditions; and how largely his system of jurisprudence was based upon traditional authority, a single fact will suffice to show. While Abou Hanifa admitted as authentic only eighteen Traditions, and Malek ibn Anas made use of three hundred, Ahmad ibn Hanbal incorporated into his system no less than thirty thousand. That system, as I have said, is now almost wholly obsolete; but the Traditions, on which it is based, have maintained their authority unimpaired. They are accepted by all orthodox Moslems, Hanifites included, as authentic revelations of the Divine will; and the work of collecting, sifting, and learning them by heart was eagerly carried on long after Ahmad ibn Hanbal had been laid in the grave.

There are, at present, six collections of Traditions

which are regarded as "authentic;"* but these huge collections represent only an infinitesimal portion of the time and labour which have been expended on this portion of Moslem theology. The Traditions themselves have been made the subject of countless commentaries. Thus, upwards of a century after the death of Ibn Hanbal, we read of an eminent Shafite doctor, al Baihaki by name, who travelled to Irak, the Hejaz, and Khorasan, in order to learn Traditions, and produced no less than one thousand volumes of expositions and commentaries upon them. Of another Shafite doctor, contemporary with al Baihaki, we are told that the alphabetical list of persons from whom he learned Traditions contains two thousand names; and that he filled fifteen hundred quires of paper with dissertations on the sciences connected with the Traditions. And there was not a single generation, up to the time of the destruction of Baghdad, in which numerous divines did not devote themselves to getting Traditions by heart, and the writing of voluminous works on their grammar, on their metaphors, on the obscure expressions which are to be found in them, on the motives which inspired them, on the *isnads* which supported them, on their classification according to the weight of authority they possess, and so forth. Only one thing they never thought of doing. It never occurred to any of these commentators to question a

* These are, the *Muwatta* of Malek ibn Anas; the *Sahih* of al Bokhari; the *Sahih* of Muslim; the *Sunan* of Abou Daoud; the *Jami* of al Tirmidi; and the *Kitab as Sunan* of Muhammad ibn Yazid al Kasimir.

Tradition on the ground of its intrinsic incredibility. Provided the *isnad* was sound and strong, any other criterion of truth was rejected as superfluous. And when one remembers that these Traditions, thus implicitly believed in for many centuries, are a gigantic collection of false morality, ridiculous legends about angels, demons, the origin of the world and of all created beings, absurd and often contradictory rules respecting ceremonial observances, the wonder is, not that Moslems should be steeped in ignorance, vice, and superstition, but that their moral and intellectual capacities have not been more completely crushed beneath this weight of rubbish.

Out of the whole number of "authentic Traditions," about three thousand refer directly to the Prophet, recording incidents in his life, or decisions which proceeded personally from him. They are of a mixed character. The greater part of them are undoubtedly authentic, and constitute a most instructive commentary on the Koran. They bring before us, in clear outline, the rude and simple surroundings of the Prophet, and enable us to see Muhammad himself, stripped of his prophetic garb, and moving as a man among fellow-men. Here are a few examples :—

"Anas said: 'The Prophet of God was of the best disposition; and one day he sent me on business, and I said, "I swear by God I will not go," whilst it was in my heart to go. Then I came out, and passed some boys playing in the bazaar; and all on a sudden, behold the Prophet laying hold of me by the neck; and I saw him laughing, and he said, "O young Anas! have you been where I ordered you?" I said, "Yes, O Messenger of God, I will go now." . . . . He was the handsomest of men, and the most liberal, and the most brave.'"

"Aswad said: 'I asked Ayesha what did his majesty do within doors? Ayesha said, 'His majesty used to sew his own shoes and clothes, and worked in his house, as one of you does; and he was the most cheerful of mankind, and used to pick off anything that fell on his clothes, and he used to milk his own goats, and wait upon himself.'"

"Ayesha said: 'His majesty was sitting, and we heard a voice we did not understand; and we heard the voice of children; and his majesty stood up, and behold, he saw an Ethiopian woman dancing, and boys dancing around her; and his majesty said, "O Ayesha! come and look." And I went and rested my chin on his shoulder, and looked at the woman. And his majesty said repeatedly, "Are you not satisfied with looking?" I said, "No." And this was that his majesty's love and regard for me might be seen. All on a sudden Omar appeared, and the people dispersed from the Ethiopian; and his majesty said, "Verily I see that the devils; the genii, and men run away from Omar."'"

"Anas said: 'I served his majesty from the time I was eight years old; and he never scolded me for anything, although things were spoilt by me. And if any of his majesty's family scolded me, he would say, "Let him alone; do not scold him, because, verily, what has been lost was by God's fate."'"

"Ayesha said: 'I was with his highness on a journey; and we ran together, to try which could beat, and I beat him; but when I grew fat, we ran together again, and his highness beat me, and said, "My beating you now is in return for your beating me."'"

In their religious aspect, these Traditions are remarkable for that strange confusion of thought which caused the Prophet to place on one level of wickedness, serious moral crimes, breaches of sumptuary regulations, and accidental omissions in ceremonial observances. Sin, throughout, is regarded as an external pollution, which can, at once, be rectified by the payment of a fine of some kind. Even murder demands no inward repentance, nor requires a heavier external punishment than the payment of a certain number of

camels. A few quotations taken at random will show this :—

"Verily, the Prophet said, 'There are three persons whom God will not speak to on the day of resurrection, and will not look towards them favourably; God will not cleanse them from their faults, and there will be a painful punishment for them.' Abou Dhar said, 'Are they hopeless, and without chance of God's compassion?. Who are those three persons, O Prophet of God?' He said, '*One of them is a wearer of long garments;* the second is a person who, after giving, upbraids with the obligation; the third, a person who swears falsely on his merchandise, to increase the wish of the buyer in purchasing it.'"

"'He who shall take the right of a Moslem by a false oath, verily God will make hell-fire proper for him, and will forbid him Paradise.' Then a man said to his highness, 'Although the right so taken should be trifling and contemptible?' He said, 'Although it should be but a twig from a bush of thorns!'"

"One dirhem of usury which a man eats, knowing it to be so, is more grievous than thirty-six fornications; and whoever has been so nourished is worthy of hell-fire."

"The taking of interest has seventy parts of guilt, the least of which is as if a man commit incest with his own mother."

"If all the inhabitants of the regions of the earth were partners in spilling the blood of a Moslem, verily God would cast them headforemost into hell-fire."

"The trousers of a man must be to the middle of his leg; and there is no fault upon him if he wears them even as low as his ankle; but whatever is below that is in hell-fire."

"Whoever makes a meal, and says afterwards, 'Thanks be to God for giving me these victuals, and who caused it to come to me without my labour or strength,' shall be pardoned all his past and future sins."

"There are no two Moslems who meet and shake hands, but their faults will be forgiven before they separate. The perfect compliment for you to pay to each other is shaking by the hand."

Another matter set forth in great detail in these Traditions are the beliefs current among the early Moslems regarding death, the resurrection, the last days, the final judgment of mankind, and the world

beyond the grave. These are, of course, all attributed to the Prophet himself; many justly so, but many are of later manufacture, and borrowed from the Jews. All, however, date from a period when Islam was still in its infancy. They have never been questioned by the Faithful, and have, therefore, become woven into the stuff of their religious life. To believe them is obligatory, and to discredit them would make a man guilty of apostasy. It would not, therefore, be right in a history of Islam to pass them over in silence.

The Moslems believe that there is not a single particle of matter in the universe, but is entrusted to the care of an angel specially nominated for that duty. They ground this belief upon a Tradition which asserts that the heavens groan beneath the weight of the countless multitude of angels; for there is not a span of space in all that illimitable expanse whereon an angel is not to be found, either kneeling or prostrate. There is an hierarchy of angels. In the highest rank are those nearest to God. These are the four supporters of His throne, and they receive the homage of the others. The first of these is in the likeness of a man; the second, in that of a bull; the third, in that of an eagle; and the fourth, in that of a lion, as in the Apocalypse. On the day of judgment, four other angels will be added to these, because in the Koran it is written, that on that occasion *eight* angels will sustain the throne of God. After these come, the angel named *Rouh* (spirit), thus named because every breath he breathes creates a soul; *Israfil*, the messenger of God, whose office it is to conduct souls to the bodies

appointed to receive them; *Jebril* (Gabriel), the guardian and communicator of God's revelation; *Mikayil* (Michael), who conveys to souls and bodies their daily nourishment, spiritual and material; *Azrael*, whose feet stand on the foundations of the earth, while his head reaches to the highest heaven; his office is to conduct souls, after their death, to their everlasting habitation, whether in hell or in Paradise. In addition to these are the Cherûbim, occupied exclusively in chanting the praises of God; the two *Secretaries*, who record the actions of men, each in a distinct writing; the *Observers*, who spy out the least gestures and hear every word of men; the *Travellers*, who traverse the whole earth in order to know when men utter the name of God, and pray to Him; *Harout* and *Marout* who, having offended God, are confined in a well near Babylon until the day of judgment; the angels of the seven planets; the guardian angels appointed to keep watch over men; and the two angels of the grave.

When a man is put into the grave and mankind leaves him, he hears the noise they make in walking away. Then two angels come to the dead man, black in colour, but having blue eyes. The name of one is Monkir, and of the other Nakir. They cause the dead man to sit up in his grave, and say to him, "What was your opinion about Muhammad?" Then the person, if he be a Moslem, will say, "I bore witness that he was the servant of God, and His Prophet." Then the grave will be expanded seven thousand yards in length, and seven thousand in breadth, and a light will be put into it, and the dead man will be told to

sleep. But if the inmate of the grave be a hypocrite, on the angelic inquiry being put to him, he will answer, "I know him not." The angels will then say to him, "Did not thy understanding and reading inform thee?" Then will he be struck with an iron hammer; and he will roar out so as to be heard by all animals, except men and genii. Then the ground will be ordered to close upon him, and break his sides, and turn his right side to his left, and his left to his right. Also for the grave of each unbeliever there are appointed ninety serpents to bite him to the day of resurrection, any one of which breathing upon the earth would blast it. The day of resurrection is preceded by the coming of Antichrist. Antichrist is blind of one eye, and has a great deal of hair falling about his face; and he brings with him the resemblances of Paradise and Hell. But that which seems like Paradise is, in truth, Hell-fire; and that which he shall say is Hell is, in fact, Paradise. He will come out of a road between Syria and Irak, and will move over the earth swiftly, "like rain followed by wind." For such tribes as believe on him, Antichrist will order the sky, and rain will fall, and he will order the earth, and it will produce verdure; and in the evening their cattle will come to them, with higher humps upon their backs than they went out with in the morning; and their udders will be full. But as for those tribes who do not believe in Antichrist, their lands will be stricken with desolation, and they will be afflicted with drought and famine.

But whilst Antichrist is about this, all on a sudden, God will send Jesus, son of Mary; and he will descend

from heaven, near to a white tower on the east of Damascus, clothed in garments coloured with red flowers, resting the palms of his hands upon the wings of two angels. And the breath of Jesus will reach as far as eye can see, and every infidel will die who comes within the influence of that breath; and Jesus will seek for Antichrist, till he finds him at the door of a village called Ludd, which is in Palestine, and will slay him there. After this, Jesus will stay seven years upon earth, during which time there will be no enmity between any two persons. But at the close of the seven years, God will send a cold wind from the side of Syria, which will take the souls of all who have but an atom of faith in their hearts, and none will remain but the wicked. These will have abundance of everything, and live luxuriously, worshipping idols, till the Archangel's trumpet is blown for the first time, and the resurrection is on foot. That trumpet is blown by the angel Israfil. It is shaped like a horn; and when Israfil blows it, Gabriel will stand on his right hand, and Michael on his left. And no one who hears the trumpet but will stagger about with fear and amazement, and all mankind will be destroyed. Then after an interval of forty days, months, or years (Abou Horaira, to whom we are indebted for these authentic particulars, is doubtful which), the second trumpet blast will be heard, and all men will stand up and behold the horrors of the resurrection. The sun and moon will be twisted up on that day like a cloth, and thrown into a corner. Then God will say to the angels, "Bring out those that shall be sent to hell!"

And the angels will say, "How many are they?" And God will reply, "Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand." However, according to another Tradition, for the Faithful there is provided some balm even in this Gilead. For "on the day of resurrection God will give a Jew or a Christian to every Moslem, and will say, 'This Jew or Christian is a means of your redemption from hell-fire';" and the substitute will be cast into the flames, the Moslem delivered. Paradise and Hell are described with the same amplitude of detail as in the Koran. Thus, for example, we are told in one Tradition, "Verily, the easiest of the infernals in punishment, is he who shall have both his shoes and the thongs of them of fire, by which the brains of his head boil like the boiling of a copper furnace, and he will not suppose that any one is more severely punished than himself, whilst verily he is the least so."

Lastly, we come to those Traditions which recount miracles worked by the Prophet. These are fabrications which those who told them and those who heard, must equally have known to be fabrications, for a very sufficient reason. The unbelievers of Mekka had perpetually taunted the Prophet with his incapacity to work a miracle, as an evident proof that he was no prophet at all. Muhammad, in the Koran, repeatedly acknowledges this incapacity, but affirms that the Koran is in itself a miracle far surpassing all the wonders wrought by the prophets who had preceded him. But he had been dead only a very few years, when the temptation to make of him a wonder-worker

became too strong to be resisted. Their conquests had brought the Moslems into closer intercourse with both Jews and Christians. The one vaunted of the miraculous powers possessed by Moses; the other of those possessed by Jesus. The Moslems were constrained to acknowledge these boasts as true, because the Koran also ascribed these powers to those two prophets. But they felt that they could not retain their Prophet on his pedestal of superiority if he was lacking in the divine gifts enjoyed by his predecessors. As they had performed miracles, he, too, must perform them. Two men—Abou Horaira and Abdallah ibn Abbas—are chiefly responsible for the fabrication of these falsehoods; but all the Companions, by their silent acquiescence, are implicated in their guilt. The stories themselves are exceedingly foolish, and are, in their general character, similar to the miracles related in the Apocryphal Gospels. Thus the khalif Ali is reported to have said: "I was with the Prophet at Mekka, and we came out to some of the environs of Mekka, and his majesty did not go near a hill or tree but it said, 'Peace be to thee, O Messenger of God!'" Another Companion relates that—"When his majesty was repeating the prayer, he would lean against one of the pillars of the *Musjid* of date-wood, and this was before the making of the pulpit; but when the pulpit was made, he went upon it, and repeated the prayer; and the pillar complained of it, and wept to such a degree that it was rending in two parts. Then his majesty came down from the pulpit and embraced the pillar, and it became like the blubbering of a child, which

could not be pacified; till at length it became silent, and his majesty said, 'The pillar wept at losing what it used to hear me repeat.'" The most noteworthy, however, of all these miraculous narratives, by reason of the hold it took and still retains on the hearts and imaginations of the Faithful, is the account of the Prophet's ascent to heaven on the beast "Borak." The single allusion to this celebrated "Night Journey" which occurs in the Koran is contained in the first verse of the 17th Sura—"Glory be to Him who carried His servant by night from the sacred temple of Mekka to the temple that is more remote, whose precinct we have blessed, that we might show him of our signs." The Prophet, in all probability, alluded here to some dream that he had had; but upon this narrow foundation was constructed a minute and particular account of the "Night Journey." The Traditions which refer to it are numerous, and are remarkable for their gross and ludicrous materialism. These narratives, which are declared to proceed from the Prophet himself, inform us that he was in Mekka, when the roof of his house was opened and Gabriel came down. He opened the Prophet's breast, and washed his heart with water from the spring Zem Zem. Then the angel brought a golden vessel full of Faith and Knowledge, which he poured into the Prophet's breast, and then carried him towards the heavens. The Prophet is mounted upon Borak, an animal between a mule and an ass. Arrived at the first heaven, he is admitted, and introduced to Adam. Adam "is of a very dark brick-dust complexion, for he was made out of reddish earth, whence

his name Adam." On his right hand and on his left are black appearances, which are the spirits of his children, in the shape of men. Those on his right are destined for Paradise; those on his left for Hell; so that when Adam looks to his right he laughs, and weeps when he looks to his left. Mounting upwards from the first heaven, the Prophet proceeds successively through the remaining six. He meets Moses, who is "a man of tall stature, and the colour of wheat, and of middling body;" and Jesus, who is "a middle-sized man, with a red and white complexion, and hair not curly but flowing loosely." All these greet Muhammad as a friend and brother. He is shown the Houris of Paradise destined for the solace and delight of the Faithful; and witnesses also the terrible punishments prepared for the unbelievers and the hypocrites. Then the time for prayers is announced, and Muhammad acts as the Imam, or leader of all the prophets who have gone before him into heaven.

Here then are the constituent elements of Muhammadan law: the Koran, the Traditions, and the systems of jurisprudence taught by the four orthodox Imams. Its peculiar character consists in this, that it is, at once, a religious creed and a political revelation. Church and State are so completely identified, that the religious life is made subject to the supervision of the courts of law; and the constitution of society and the government is supposed to be the result of a series of Divine enactments. In religion, therefore, all spiritual development is treated as a crime against society, and punished accordingly. In civil and political life, all

efforts after reform or improvement are regarded as a rebellion against the revealed will of God, and punished as infidelity. The system, as a whole, rejects experience as a guide to deeper insight or a wider knowledge; tramples upon the teaching of the past; pays no heed to differences of climate, character, or history; but regards itself as a body of absolute truth, no jot or tittle of which can be rejected without incurring the everlasting wrath of God.

All this flows, as a natural consequence, from the idea of humanity set forth in the Koran. Muhammad did not deny that other prophets, besides himself, had had revelations of the Divine will. He insisted perpetually that they had. What he emphatically denied was, that man, simply as such, was possessed of any spiritual organ which enabled him to receive light from the primal Fountain of Light. "The light that lighteth every man who comes into the world," had no existence for Muhammad. Men, according to him, lived wholly without God in the world; but certain individuals were selected from the race, and to them, for the guidauce and instruction of their fellows, God revealed the ordinances written on "The Preserved Table." The evidence of the origin of these ordinances was not to be found in their fitness to promote the happiness of men, or their harmony with the human reason and conscience, but in the miracles wrought by the prophets who taught them. These miracles were the sure and certain proof of their Divine origin. But by the lapse of time, and the sins of men, these earlier revelations had become so largely corrupted, that they

lured men to destruction, instead of guiding them along the path that leads to salvation. Therefore God, in his mercy, had sent down "a pure Arabic Koran," a literal transcript of the decrees inscribed upon the Everlasting Table. The miracle in this case was, that this revelation of hidden wisdom had proceeded from the lips of an illiterate camel-driver. This revelation superseded all that had preceded it. It was perfect; a full and complete manifestation of the will of God. There being, therefore, no organ in man for the discernment of Divine truth, the desire was destroyed to bring the teachings of revelation into harmony with the aspirations and hopes of men. These hopes and aspirations were regarded as false lights glimmering over bogs and treacherous marsh-lands; and a terrible doom awaited those who, seduced by their glittering appearance, abandoned the strait path of safety.

According to Moslem notions, the Koran, the Traditions, and the four legal systems contain an immense accumulation of first principles, which are themselves above the reach of human criticism; and this for a double reason. Firstly, because they are an expression of the will of God; and, secondly, because they are embodied in a language which is no longer understood with exactness and precision.* This last conclusion furnishes a curious example of the thin but fearless logic of Moslem divines. This revelation, they argued, was made in "pure Arabic," such as was spoken in the days of the Prophet. With the lapse of time, this "pure Arabic" became corrupted with admixtures of foreign tongues. Words which conveyed a certain

meaning to the mind of Muhammad, were charged with a different signification to the generations that came after him. Consequently, only those who lived in the days of the Prophet himself, or in the next generation, were considered competent to expound the meaning of the sacred text Later divines and theologians confined themselves strictly to the labour of learning by heart the matter of revelation; and he was held to be the greatest man who could repeat from memory the greatest part of the Koran and the largest number of Traditions.

Commentators on the Koran did not endeavour to justify the ways of God to men; they limited themselves to the elucidation of grammatical and verbal difficulties, and the transcription of absurd and monstrous legends, which were to be accepted in virtue of the *isnad*, or chain of authorities, which vouched for them. No one dared to make the revelation itself a subject of investigation. The same conviction has governed the development of Islam on its political side. The legislation in the Koran and the Traditions has always been regarded as exempt from any tests derived from the nature of man or the facts of social life. A good Moslem would consider as merely impious trifling, to question the decrees of the Koran, on the ground that they are not adapted to the characteristics of human nature. What, he would ask with great indignation, is human nature, that it should set itself up against the will of God? All legislation, therefore, is deductive; its propriety depends upon its soundness as a logical sequence, not upon its tendency

to promote the well-being of mankind. But the right to make deductions from the Sacred writings has long been extinct in the Muhammadan world. There are three degrees of legislative independence—absolute, relative, and special. The last is the only one left to the Faithful in these degenerate days.

Absolute independence in legislation is the first gift of God. It appertained to the four "rightly directed" khalifs; to the seven jurisconsults of Medina; and to the four orthodox Imams. The rights of one who has attained to this degree are solemn and important. In his researches into the meaning of the Divine Law, he is not required to regulate his conclusions by any standard other than his individual sense of truth and fitness. He is the sole mediator between the Law and those whom he instructs. He can employ the words of the Prophet, but his pupils can employ only those of their master. Thus, supposing one of his disciples to have found a manifest contradiction between some sentence of his Imam, and the Tradition or passage in the Koran from which it is deduced, he would not be justified in ignoring the deduction, and taking as his guide the language of the Prophet. He must remember that the Imam has the right to explain the Koran and the Traditions by the light of his private judgment; and that he probably has satisfactory reasons, which he has not chosen to enunciate, for the explanation, which to his pupils bears the appearance of error. No one can venture to pass judgment on a jurist of the first degree, except a jurist of equal eminence. Following out this principle of intellectual

submission to its logical consequences, it is not permitted for a Muhammadan who has enrolled himself as the disciple of one Imam, to reconsider the matter and transfer his allegiance to another. His choice having once been made, is held to be final and irrevocable. Morally and intellectually, he has entered a house of bondage, in which he must remain a prisoner for life. True it is that the abstract possibility of any man attaining to the exalted rank of absolute independence is not denied. But the conditions laid down are so onerous, that it is practically impossible. These conditions are five in number:—(1). A complete and perfect knowledge of the Arabic language, together with the power to discriminate, in the exposition of the Koran, between the literal and the allegorical, the universal and the particular, the statements of universal and those of limited application. (2). To know the Koran perfectly by heart, with all the explanations received by tradition from the Companions. (3). A perfect knowledge of all the Traditions (though some authorities say that three thousand will suffice), according to their texts and their *isnads;* to know the degree of authority attaching to each one of them; to be able to discriminate between the obligatory and the optional, the permissive, the restrictive, and the prohibitive; and the power to repeat from memory all Traditions which are entirely trustworthy. (4). A complete knowledge of the four orthodox systems of jurisprudence. (5). The possession of logical ability to trace out clearly the connection between the deduction, and the point from which it is deduced, so that the sequence between the

two may be rendered apparent to the satisfaction of intelligent men.

To crown all, the right of conferring the degree of "independence" is the privilege of the *Ulema*, or Council of Muftis, and it is quite certain that they would never confer it, supposing a candidate were so rash as to come before them for examination. But the character of the conditions has effectually prevented this. There has been no aspirant after this high calling since Ahmad ibn Hanbal was followed to his grave by the sorrowing population of Baghdad.

The second degree, or that of "relative independence," has never been achieved by any divine during his lifetime. But after death, it has been accorded to a few disciples of the great Imams, who, by the studies of many years, have methodized the systems, and cleared up occasional obscurities in the doctrines of their masters. The great Imams taught orally. Their disciples of the second degree took down their lessons in writing, cleared up parts which had been left vague and indeterminate, and deduced logically still remoter consequences from the principles formulated by their masters.

The third degree, or that of "special independence," is a privilege acquired by a very few jurists in each generation. It is one enabling them to decide, according to their private judgment, points which have not been settled by jurists of the two degrees above them. But in making such decisions, they may not enforce their reasoning by direct citations from the

Koran or the Traditions; neither is it lawful for them to contradict any principle enunciated by the Imams. Their decisions must be based upon the jurisprudence of the Imam to whose school they belong, and be a logical deduction from it. Thus, in any Muhammadan state legislative reforms are simply impossible. There exists no initiative. The sultan or khalif can claim the allegiance of his people only so long as he remains an exact executor of the prescriptions of the law. The *Ulema*, or Council of the Wise, possesses no other function but that of deciding whether any legal proposition is or is not in harmony with the law. If it be not, no intrinsic merits can give it practical validity. "If," says one Tradition, "God appoints as your ruler a slave, with ears or nose cut off, and he puts you to death by the orders of God's book, hear his orders with an ear of satisfaction and submit to his commands . . . . but if a Moslem is ordered to act contrary to the law, he must neither attend to it nor obey it." In a word, a religious revolution is required, before the work of political reform can begin in a Muhammadan state.

And what hope is there of any such revolution? Absolutely none. The religious history of mankind shows that while a creed has often been destroyed by attacks from without, it can be regenerated only from within. And where in the bosom of Islam could we hope for a regenerator? From the hour of his birth the Moslem becomes a member of a system in which every act of his life is governed by a minute ritual. He is beset on every side with a circle of inflexible

formalities. He is told that even his prayers to God will be null and void unless at each prostration his nose is lightly rubbed in the dust.* He is warned against "the malady of thought," lest he should become the occasion of division among the people of God. He is told on the authority of the Prophet that "he who dissents from assemblies of Moslems one span, verily takes off the rope of Islam from his own neck," and "is of the people of hell, although he says his prayers, keeps fasts, and thinks himself a Moslem."

* This is a fair specimen of the manner in which religion is materialized by the Moslem Divines. The above-mentioned rule is accompanied by a saving clause, even more ludicrous, which provides that the actual rubbing in the dust is excused if the person praying has a sore place on the top of the nose. The explanation of these absurdities is to be found in Muhammad's conception of sin. Sin, he taught, was a material pollution adhering to the body; and the Muhammadan jurisconsults following out this notion, have reduced righteousness to a state of ceremonial purity, and sin to a state of ceremonial impurity. Thus prayer is absolutely useless if any matter, legally considered impure, adheres to the person of the worshipper, even though he be unconscious of its presence. Prayer also is null and void unless the men and women praying are attired in a certain prescribed manner. A difficulty regarding the efficacy of prayer which has greatly exercised the minds of Muhammadan Divines, is the following: In the absence of water, the Prophet, as everyone knows, allowed his followers to purify their bodies with sand. Supposing, then, that a man previous to praying has made an ablution of sand. He prays one prayer, and then becomes aware of water in his vicinity. He accordingly purifies himself with water, and completes his devotions. Was that first prayer performed after a dust ablution merely, effectual or not? This question remains to this day an unsettled one in Muhammadan theology. It is, perhaps, needless to add that, in consequence of this material conception of purity, much of the religious law of Islamism is remarkable for its revolting immodesty; or, that the *lex talionis* being its ruling principle, every (so-called) sin is entirely rectified by the infliction of a fine proportioned to its magnitude.

His inner, as his outer, life must work in prescribed grooves. And the consequence is, that those faculties are starved to death, by which alone the regenerative impulse can be given.

But we may, for the sake of argument, conceive of some rarely-gifted nature who has passed through this ordeal uninjured. He has arrived at manhood, and desires passionately not to destroy Islam, but to reform it. But how is he to begin? To what can he make appeal? There is not a crime or defect in the history of Islam, the counterpart of which is not to be found in the history of Christendom. Christians have mistaken a lifeless formalism for the vital element in religion; Christians have interpreted the Gospel as giving a sanction for the worst cruelties of religious persecution; Christians have done their utmost to confine the intellect and the moral sense within limits defined by a human authority; but the strongest witness against all these errors has been Christ Himself. Every reformer who rose to protest against them could appeal to Him and His teaching as his authority and justification. But no Moslem can lift up his voice in condemnation of Polygamy, Slavery, Murder, Religious War, and Religious Persecution, without condemning the Prophet himself; and being thereby cut off from the body of the Faithful. There is no escape from this vicious circle. A Moslem, so long as he remains a Moslem, must acquiesce in a moral and intellectual life which is incompatible with progress and humanity. No religion can rise higher than its source. Christendom will never ascend to a

higher spiritual level than that manifested in the life of Christ; and the Muhammadan world, at its best, can never be more than an image of the gross vices and imperfect virtues which made up the character of Muhammad. How hopeless, in Christendom, would have been the cause of humanity, if Jesus of Nazareth (claiming to be and accepted as the Son of God) had practised polygamy, connived at murder, traded in slaves, sanctioned and superintended a massacre of Pharisees, and preached the prosecution of religious wars as the surest passport to heaven. Muhammad did all these things, and the Muhammadan world is the result. Nothing less than the destruction of Islam can heal the diseases from which it suffers, because the vices which occasion them are inseparable from the profession of Islam. The vices will not cease to be regarded as akin to virtues, until belief in the religion is destroyed.

But men did not all at once acquiesce in this moral and intellectual servitude. They endeavoured, in two different directions, to open a pathway of escape. The one was attempted by "The Men of the Path," and terminated in the pestilential morasses of Pantheism; the other led those who followed it to perish in a barren wilderness where logical abstractions were their only food.

# CHAPTER III.

## THE "MEN OF THE PATH."

### A.D. 632—934.

THE absolute predestination of man and all earthly events is a fundamental doctrine of the Muhammadan faith. No one who has associated ever so slightly with Moslems, but must have perceived how profound is their conviction of its truth. "It is my fate," is the simple and sufficient philosophy which for a Moslem accounts for and mitigates the severest ills of life. Nevertheless, in the Koran, the teaching even of this cardinal doctrine is variable and inconsistent. The Koran, it cannot be too often insisted upon, is merely a collection of fragmentary utterances which extend over a period of three-and-twenty years. It is almost wholly destitute of method or system. Muhammad put forth his revelations according to the needs of the moment; and only late in life did he attempt to give something like logical consistency to his theology. It was then that he laid down the principle, which has done such yeoman's service ever since, that where two revelations contradict one another, the later abrogates the earlier. The changes in doctrine, reflecting the changes in his situation,

are in no instance better exemplified than in this of Fatalism.

In his early exhortations there are few, if any, traces of the doctrine of Fatalism. Muhammad, at that time, was full of hope and onlooking thoughts. He summoned men to repent and believe, in the confident expectation that they would eagerly respond to his call. It is plain, that so long as he entertained this expectation, the doctrine of man's free will would form a part of his teaching. He could not call upon men to reform their ways, and in the same breath assert that they had no power to do so. Consequently, in these early addresses, the free will of man and the responsibility resulting thence are everywhere implied. It is by a life of freely-chosen moral excellence that heaven is to be gained and hell avoided. The ransoming of captives, the distribution of food, and a fervent trust in God as "the most just of judges"—such are the acts and state of mind which mark the true Believer.

> "As to him who giveth alms, and feareth God,
> And yieldeth assent to the good,
> To him shall we make easy the path to happiness.
> But as to him who is covetous, and bent on riches,
> And calleth the good a lie,
> To him will we make easy the path to misery."
>
> *Sura* xcii. 5—11.

But when Muhammad found that his appeals knocked unavailingly at the obdurate hearts of the Kuraish, he was compelled to fall back upon the doctrine of Fatalism to explain his ill success. A new conception was put forth of the relations subsisting

between God and man. God, now, is He who "breathes into the soul its wickedness and piety." The Faithful must not be discouraged by the invincible scepticism of their fellow-tribesmen, nor thereby be tempted to infer that the teaching of the Prophet was in fault. Nor, on the other hand, are the scoffers to imagine they will escape the damnation of hell because their reasons are not persuaded by the appeals of Muhammad. They are, though they know it not, as so much clay in the hands of the potter. "God misleads whom He pleases, and whom He pleases He places upon the straight path." "No soul can believe but by the permission of God, and He shall lay His wrath upon those who do not understand." "As to the infidels . . . their hearts and their ears hath God sealed up, and over their eyes is a covering. For them a severe chastisement." "And whom God shall please to guide, that man's breast will He open to Islam; but whom He shall please to mislead, strait and narrow will He make his breast, as though he were mounting up into the very heavens. Thus doth God inflict dire punishment on those who believe not."

As his life drew to a close, Muhammad insisted with increasing vehemence on this doctrine of predestination. To those who murmured at the sanguinary defeat of Ohod, saying, "Were we to have gained aught in this affair, none of us had been slain at this place," the Prophet replied, "Had ye remained in your homes, they who were decreed to be slain would have gone forth to the places where they lie." God is the possessor of all power, and none can escape Him. He

raises up whom He will, and whom He will He abases. He is over all things potent. It was, therefore, an idle thing for them to hope that they could prolong their lives by an ignominious flight from the battle-field. Before the heavens and the earth were made, the events of each man's life had been predetermined by God, and "noted down in a distinct writing." The arrow of death would strike them when the appointed moment came. In the Traditions this doctrine is insisted upon in the most uncompromising manner. "There is not one amongst you"—so said the Prophet —"whose sitting-place is not written by God, whether in the fire or in Paradise;" and on another occasion, "Whatever is in the universe is by the order of God, even to understanding and stupidity;" and, still more plainly, he is reported to have said, "Whatever happeneth to thee is from fate; and if thou shouldest die without believing in fate, thou most certainly wouldest enter into hell-fire."

The annals of early Moslem history abound with strange and startling indications of the effects of this teaching. When Yezid ibn Mouhalleb is surrounded by enemies, and entreated to save his life by flight, he exclaims, "I care not for them; they cannot delay death if my hour be come, or hasten it if destiny has not so decreed." A Kharijite, noted for his frequent wars and numerous battles, thus encourages his soul in a moment of danger—"I said to myself when I wavered at the sight of the warriors, 'Shame upon thee! fear not! Wert thou to ask the delay of a single day above the term prescribed to thy existence

thy request would not be heard. Be firm, then, in the career of death, be firm! To obtain an everlasting life is a thing impossible!'" These lines, says Ibn Khallikan, "would give courage to the greatest coward God ever created."

Again; it is related that Ziad ibn Abih wrote these words to the khalif Muawia:—"Commander of the Faithful! my left hand holds Irak in submission unto you, but my right is unoccupied, and waits to be employed in your service; appoint me, therefore, governor of Hejaz." This request having reached the ears of Abdallah ibn Omar, who was residing at Mekka, he exclaimed, "O God! withhold from us the right hand of Ziad!" A pestilential swelling immediately broke out on it; and the assembled physicians having advised amputation, Ziad called in Shuraih, the kadi of Koufa, and consulted him on the lawfulness of such an operation. Shuraih returned this answer: "God's bounty towards you has a certain measure, and your life a fixed limit. If you are to live longer in this world, I should not wish to see you without a right hand" (amputation of the right hand being the punishment for thieves laid down in the Koran); "and if the time of your death be now come, you will have to say, when asked by the Lord how you lost your hand, 'It was through dislike of meeting Thee, and to avoid what Thou hadst predestined.'" Ziad died that day; and the enemies of the emir reproached Shuraih, because his advice had prevented Ziad from committing a sin, and so lightened the punishment that would fall upon him in the next world. To this the kadi replied, "He

asked counsel from me, and he whose counsel is asked should act with sincerity; were it not so, I should have wished his hand to be cut off one day, and his foot another; and then every limb of his body day by day."

But in order to estimate the whole effect of this doctrine, we must contemplate it in conjunction with another—that of the transitoriness of this life, compared with the duration of the life to come. The Prophet is never weary of contrasting these two states of existence. Fair and pleasant, no doubt, is this world, which the Almighty has created out of nothing; and fair seeming to men is the love of pleasures from women and children, and treasures of gold and silver. But these things are but a cheating show—"a mist that rolls away!" The earth is but a film of matter spread over the quenchless fires of hell. The heat of those flames we can feel even in this life. So taught the Prophet; for when his followers complained that at midday prayer the ground was so hot it scorched their foreheads in the act of prostration, he said, "When the heat is excessive at the time of midday prayer, procrastinate; because the excess of heat is from the boiling of hell and the scattering of its fires." At the sound of the last trumpet, this film of matter would disappear like a scroll that is folded up, and hell would be revealed, where "the shadows lie in triple masses," and the sparks which it casteth out are like "tawny camels." There transgressors shall abide for ever; "no coolness shall they taste therein, nor any drink, save boiling water and running sores." These appal-

ling pictures acquired a deeper horror from the evident reality they had for the Prophet. "By God!" he is reported to have said, "if ye knew what I know, verily ye would laugh little and weep much." "O Messenger of God!" said Abou Bekr, "verily thou art become old." "Those Suras," he replied, "have made me so, which mention the condition of futurity, punishments of hell-fire, and dreadful denunciations."

An inscrutable God, whom none in the heavens or the earth might approach but as a slave; a life on earth, every movement and thought of which was predestined; and beyond, the quenchless fires of hell. A gloomier creed it would be hard to conceive; and how dark the shadow it threw across the souls of the devout Believers, there are not wanting numerous signs to show. Thus, of the khalif Ali it is related that a friend visited him, and said, "How does the Prince of Believers to-day?" The khalif replied, "Like a poor sinner living the lot which has been assigned to him, and awaiting its dreadful termination." "What think you of this world?" asked his friend. "What can I say," replied Ali, "regarding a dwelling-place, on the threshold of which is sorrow, and at the extremity is death; where the rich are condemned to corruption, and the poor to misery; where a severe judgment awaits the good, and everlasting fire the wicked?" "Who, then," asked his friend, "can be considered happy?" "Those," was the reply, "who are asleep beneath the sod, delivered from the torments of hell, and in expectation of a reward."

Concerning Ammar ibn Abdallah, one of the Com-

panions, we are told that he was wont to fast the entire day, and spend whole nights in prayer. On such occasions he would be heard by his neighbours shrieking out in the stillness of the night hours, "Oh my God! the fire of hell robs me of sleep! Oh, pardon me my sins! The lot of man in this world is care and sorrow, and in the next judgment and the fire. Oh! where shall the soul find rest and happiness?"

Abou Imran was a celebrated Imam and doctor, and one of the *Tabis*. When his death drew near, he was sorely troubled in spirit, and being spoken to about it, said, "What peril can be greater than mine? I must expect a messenger from my Lord, sent to announce to me either Paradise or Hell! I declare solemnly I would rather remain as I am now, with my soul struggling in my throat till the day of resurrection, than undergo such a hazard."

Before the morning dawned, until the going down of the sun, the eminent teacher, Said ibn Jobair, would remain prostrate in prayer. When asked by his daughter why he never slept, he replied that the fires of hell had banished sleep from his eyes.

One day a certain person met Hasan al Basri, and inquired how he had slept. Hasan replied, "Well." The other inquired further, "in what state of health he was?" To this Hasan made reply, "You inquire concerning my health; tell me, then, first how people find themselves who journey in a ship upon the ocean, when the ship suddenly breaks up, and each clings to the first piece of wood he can lay hold of; how think

you do such find themselves?" "In a truly frightful condition," said the inquirer. "Well," returned Hasan, "the condition in which I am is far worse."

Yezid Rakashi entered one day into the presence of the khalif Omar ibn Abd al Aziz, who requested of him some pious consolation. "O Prince of Believers!" said Yezid, "know that thou art not the first khalif who must die." Omar wept and said, "Speak on." Yezid continued, "O Prince of Believers! between you and Adam there has not been one who did not descend with swiftness into the grave." Omar wept and said, "Speak on." "O Prince of Believers! betwixt thee and Paradise, as betwixt thee and Hell, there is no resting-place." When Omar heard these words, he fell to the ground senseless.

Of the great Imam, Abou Hanifa, we are told, that he would pass entire nights reciting the Koran, and his sobbings were so loud that the neighbours would pray to God to have pity on him. A friend of the Imam relates the following anecdote. "Abou Hanifa stood in great awe of the Lord; and one night the *muezzin* recited to us the chapter of the *Earthquake*, after finishing the evening prayer; and Abou Hanifa was behind him. When the congregation withdrew, I looked and saw Abou Hanifa seated on the floor in profound meditation, and uttering deep sighs. So I said, "I shall go away, for he minds me not." On departing, I left the lamp burning; and in it was very little oil. The next morning, after daybreak, I returned back and found him standing, with his hand clutched on his beard, and saying, "O Thou! who punishest even

for an atom's weight of evil deeds, protect thy servant an Noman from the fire of hell, and deliver him from the evil which conducts thereto! Permit him to enter into the greatness of thy mercy!" I then pronounced the call to prayer whilst the lamp was still burning, and he standing. When I went in, he asked me if I came to take away the lamp. I answered, "I have just made the call to morning prayer." On this, he told me not to speak of what I had seen, and made a prayer of two *rakats*. He then remained seated, till the public prayer began, and he joined in it that morning, without having made any ablution since the preceding evening," —thereby showing that he had not slept the whole night through, as an ablution before morning prayer is necessary, if the person praying has slept, even for a moment, during the preceding night.

Among the most eminent of the disciples of Malek ibn Anas was al Kaanabi, a native of Medina. I have given in the first chapter his narrative of the last moments of the great Imam. Al Kaanabi was surnamed "the Monk," on account of his devotion and virtue. An intimate friend of his was wont to relate, "When we went to see him, he would come out to us with the face of one who had been looking down on the terrors of hell. May God preserve us from it!"

Of Abd al Aziz al Razee, a celebrated preacher of the day, we are told that when he described the terrors of the last day, he terrified the entire Mosque to that degree, that many of his hearers dropped senseless.

Such gloomy conceptions of man and his destiny operated in two ways. In the many they produced either the indifference or the recklessness of despair. In the few they awoke the spirit of asceticism. Devout men drew together into small communities. They renounced the deceitful pleasures of the world, and by means of prayers and austerities resolved to batter and assail the iron gates of heaven and the inscrutable heart of Him who dwelt within them. The first of these societies was formed during the lifetime of the Prophet by Owais ibn-Aamir. This man never actually saw the Prophet; but so great was his love and veneration for him, that he caused two of his front teeth to be extracted, because Muhammad had lost two of those teeth in the disastrous battle of Ohod. Owais affirmed that all who entered his society, and performed the mortifications enjoined upon them, would have these two teeth miraculously extracted during sleep, and on awakening find them under their pillows. The example set by him was followed by the khalifs Abou Bekr and Ali; and to the associations of recluses created by them, all the various orders of durweshes, which are scattered over the countries of Islam, trace back their origin.

These recluses were designated "mystics;" but in this the earliest period of their history, there was nothing mystical in the tenets they professed. According to their belief God and man were separated by an impassable gulf. Growth in the grace and knowledge of the Deity, absorption of the individual life into the infinite source of all life—these and similar ideas were

altogether foreign to their minds. They were merely the soldiers of a forlorn hope; and their desperate task was to break through the barriers of eternal destiny. They had no confident expectations of a joy set before them. Only so much they knew; the God of the Prophet had prescribed prayer and fasting as a means of entering Paradise. These acts, therefore, they would perform without ceasing; so that at the Last Day no reproach should attach to them, that they had not done their uttermost to escape the fires of hell. It was not long, however, before this harsh and hopeless creed assumed a softer and more amiable character. Contact with Eastern Christianity made the Faithful acquainted with the doctrine of a Divine Word, speaking to the minds and hearts of men. They found in the deserts of Egypt, in Syria and Mesopotamia, multitudes who had withdrawn from the world in order to hold communion with this Divine Word. Syria, in particular, was at that time the home of a peculiar monachism, from whose tenets the Muhammadan durweshes have largely borrowed. Its fundamental principle was that every man in consequence of Adam's fall brings with him into this world an evil spirit, under whose dominion he lives. All ascetic discipline, all the means of grace in the Church, are powerless to deliver the soul from the bondage of this evil spirit. They are only able to check single outbreaks of sin. The root of the evil—the power of the evil spirit over the will—is untouched by them. To redeem the will from that dominion, the only effectual means is constant inward prayer. Whoever has

attained to this, so that the eye of the soul is, as it were, unswervingly fixed upon the beauty and holiness of God, he has become free. For him, henceforth, there is no need of fasting or self-mortification. The outward ordinances of the Church he may regard with indifference. Launched thus on the downward slope to Pantheism, it was not long before these mystics arrived at the doctrine of self-deification. They declared themselves to be partakers of the Divine nature. They looked upon the appearances of angels in the Old Testament, upon the patriarchs and prophets, and upon Christ Himself, as so many manifestations of the Divine Essence. And they were persuaded that the excellences of all were concentrated in themselves; so that if angel, patriarch, prophet, or Christ was named to one of them he would reply, "That I am myself." This sect was known under many names; they were sometimes called *Euchites*, on account of their doctrine of constant inward prayer; sometimes *Choreutes*, in allusion to their mystic dances; and sometimes *Enthusiasts*, from the communications they affirmed that they received from the Holy Spirit.*

In this development of Eastern Monachism we find anticipated the later phases of Muhammadan mysticism —its contempt for outward forms and ordinances, its belief in the elevating power of inward meditation on the Divine perfections, its mystic dances, and its ultimate self-deification. As the ranks of the Faithful were recruited from the Christian Churches, the new

* Neander's Church History, Eng. Trans., vol. iii. p. 341, *et seq.*

converts must have brought with them stories of the miracles wrought by holy men who had thus separated themselves from the world, of their powers of prediction, their knowledge of the Divine will, and so forth. The Arab was far too credulous and superstitious to question the reality of such stories. They were hailed by him as the revelation of a mental capacity, which had hitherto been hid from him. If the Polytheists could thus, by mere meditation, ascend in spirit to the Holy of Holies, a true believer could of course do so likewise. The difficulty was to reconcile such spiritual experiences with the hard doctrine of "exemption." This doctrine required the Moslem to believe that the Deity was utterly removed from the creatures He had made. Man and his God, neither in form nor in substance, had anything in common whereby such intercommunion was possible, as was presupposed in the practices of Eastern Monasticism. But urgent spiritual need succeeded without much difficulty in constructing a bridge over this doctrinal abyss. It began by instituting an examination of the doctrine of "exemption." This doctrine required the Faithful to believe that God was "separated" from His creatures. Granted. But how separated? The term "separation" could not imply that men were in one place and God in another. Such an assertion would be a denial of the omnipresence of God; and by giving Him a position in space, would imply that He also possessed a material body. God therefore could not be separated from men, in the sense of being removed from them by a greater or less extent of space. In what, then, con-

sisted this separation? Was it that God was divided from man relatively to His essence? But how could that be? Life assuredly is an essential attribute of the Creator. It is from this life, as the only source of creative power, that the world and all that it contains, have been called into existence. Otherwise there would be in the world something which had not been created by God. At this point came in the inevitable Tradition. "God," the Prophet was declared to have said, "was a hidden treasure, and had created men in order that they might seek after and find Him." The sentiment was undoubtedly Christian, as also was the argument by which it was justified and explained.

There is (so said these mystics) throughout this sublunary world a gradual ascent in the orders of being. First we have minerals, then plants, then animals. Each of these passes into the class above it by gradations so minute as to be imperceptible; each implies, in the manner of its existence, the promise of an order of life higher than itself. At the summit of this ascending scale stands man, differing from all lower nature by his powers of judgment and foresight; his thoughts that look before and after. But these powers, by their imperfection and limitation, show that man is not the terminating point of a series. He must be linked on to a higher order of life, precisely as Nature gradually ascends up to him. That he has the power of passing into the unseen world, and reading the secrets of the Future, is proved by the phenomena of dreams. Dreams, the

Prophet himself declared, were a forty-sixth part of the prophetic capacity. No one questions that they make known to men events which have yet to come to pass. Joseph the patriarch, and favourite of God, regarded dreams as revelations of future events, and was skilled in their interpretation. The Prophet, and the khalif Abou Bekr, did the same; and the former, when he came forth after morning prayers, was wont to ask his companions if any among them had had a dream, hoping to find in them some indication of the triumph of his religion. The first revelation which God communicated to the Prophet was made known to him through the medium of a dream. Moreover, it was written in the Koran, "God taketh souls unto Himself at death, *and during sleep those who do not die;* and He retains those on which He hath passed a decree of death, *but sendeth the others back till a time that is fixed.*" (Sura xxxix. 43.) All this sufficed to prove, not merely that man possessed capacities which fitted him to become the denizen of the angelic world, but that he had access to that world even in this life. This was explicable only upon the supposition that during sleep the disturbing power of the senses being laid at rest, the soul became aware of that angelic world, its natural home and abiding place, and held converse with saints and angels in the presence of the Deity. By renunciation, therefore, of this world, and intense meditation on God, it would be possible, even in our waking moments, so to abstract the soul from the perturbing domination of sense, that it should acquire the power of passing into the unseen world.

The poison of Pantheism lurked in these doctrines from the beginning. But the early Moslem mystics were not aware of this. They believed themselves to be upholders of the creed of Muhammad. "Our system of doctrine," so said al Junaid, the most celebrated of these early mystics, "is firmly bound with the dogmas of the faith, the Koran, and the Traditions." What they earnestly strove after was to put a living soul beneath the ceremonial observances and hard, abstract dogmas, which made up the religion of the multitude. The sayings of some of these early mystics are full of moral earnestness and insight. "The worth of a holy man," said one, "does not consist in this, that he eats grain, and clothes himself in wool, but in the knowledge of God, and submission to His will." And again: "A heart without sorrow goes to ruin like an untenanted house. As neither meat nor drink profit the diseased body, so no warning avails to touch the heart full of the love of this world." "Thou deservest not the name of a learned man till thy heart is emptied of the love of this world. The true sign that a man knows himself is when he rates himself lower than a dog." The neophytes who entered upon "the Path"—as the discipline necessary to a knowledge of God was called—were directed diligently to examine themselves before they set forth. Did they enter upon "the Path" from a single-minded desire to know God? or merely from the baser motive to enjoy the sensible gratification of having the soul withdrawn back into the invisible world? The latter, they were warned, was a veritable act of Polytheism. The man who

entered upon "the Path" actuated by such a desire would never reach the goal of spiritual communion. These glimpses of the spiritual world came, as it were, accidentally. They were the gift of the grace of God. The recipient had no premonitions of them. He wanders through the world with the sense of an aching void at his heart. It is the yearning of the soul for the presence of the absent Beloved. A touch, a look, a strain of music, strikes the electric chain wherewith he is darkly bound, and for one rapturous ecstatic moment the walls of sense are broken down, and he stands in the presence of Divinity. Thus the Shaikh al Junaid related of himself that he never profited so much (never, that is, was drawn so near to God) as by some verses he once heard. He was passing through the paper bazaar of Baghdad, when the tones of a slave girl struck on his ear. He listened while she sang—

"When I say to thee, 'Departure hath given me the raiment of decay,' thou repliest, 'Were it not for departure, love had not been proved sincere.' If I say, 'This heart is burned by passion,' thou sayest, 'The fires of passion ennoble the heart;' and if I say, 'I am not in fault,' thou answerest, 'Thy existence is a fault to which no fault can be compared.'"

On hearing these words the Shaikh uttered a loud cry, and fainted away. While he was in that state, the master of the house came out and said, "What is this, sir?" The Shaikh replied, "The effect of what I heard." The whole philosophy of the Moslem mystic is, in fact, summed up in the verses above quoted.

Departure or exile from the divine presence it is

which clothes humanity in its present garment of decay—its devotion to sense, its vain ambitions, its idle aspirations; and yet but for this separation, and the void within thereby occasioned, the soul would never have recalled the pleasures it hath known, nor that imperial palace whence it came. The heart is burned with a ceaseless longing to be reabsorbed into the divine essence whence it draws its life; and yet that very passion is the purifying and elevating influence which emancipates it from the dominion of sense. "I am not in fault," it may occasionally cry under the sense of an intolerable separation; but not till its individual existence is merged and reabsorbed into the divine fountain of all life can the pangs of separate existence be rectified and removed. The same idea is worked out in a Soufi fable, which, though of later origin than the period I am at present treating of, may be inserted here as an explanation of the thoughts which were, even now, dimly working in the heart of Moslem mysticism. A frog had its home on the margin of the sea. Day and night it never ceased to chant the praises of the ocean. It was to the ocean, so sung the frog, that it owed the graces of its mind, and the power whereby its body had attained to perfection. Wherever its thoughts turned, wherever its eyes were fixed, there stretched the boundless immensity of the ocean, filling it with awe and unspeakable delight. These praises, sung without ceasing, were heard by certain fishes, and excited in them an ardent desire to become acquainted with this marvellous ocean. They determined to set forth, and never to rest from their

travels until they had discovered the object of their desires. They had fruitlessly traversed an immense space, when they were entangled in a fisherman's net, and drawn out of the water. By dint of desperate struggles they freed themselves from the meshes, and fell back into the water. Then, for the first time, they perceived what that ocean was of which they had been in search.

Among the most eminent of these early mystics, was Umm al Khair (the mother of good) Rabia, a native of Basra. She passed the greater part of her life at Jerusalem, where her piety and asceticism gathered round her a numerous company of disciples and imitators. She died A.H. 135 (A.D. 752-3), and her tomb near Jerusalem became an object of pilgrimage. Many are the anecdotes preserved regarding her. She used to say, when holding converse with God, "Consume with fire, O God, a presumptuous heart which loveth thee!" And on one of these occasions a voice spoke to her and said, "That we shall not do! Think not of us an ill thought." Another of her sayings was, "If my good works appear to the world, I count them as nought;" and a counsel which she was fond of impressing upon neophytes was, "Hide thy good deeds as closely as thou wouldst hide thy sins." "I reserve," she said, "my heart for thy converse, O Lord, and leave my body to keep company with those who desire my society. My body is thus the companion of the visitor, but my dearly Beloved is the companion of my heart."

Abda, "one of God's excellent handmaids, and the servant of Rabia," related as follows:—"Rabia

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used to pass whole nights in prayer, and at morning dawn she took a slight sleep in her oratory till daylight; and I have heard her say, when she sprang in dread from her couch, '*O my soul! how long wilt thou sleep? when wilt thou awake? Soon thou shalt sleep to rise no more, till the call shall summon thee on the day of resurrection?*' This was her constant custom till the time of her death. On its approach she called me and said, '*O Abda! inform none of my death, and shroud me in this gown.*' This was a gown of hair cloth, which she wore when praying at the time in which the eyes of others were closed in sleep. I shrouded her in that gown, and in a woollen veil which she used to wear; and about a year afterwards I saw her in a dream clothed in a gown of green satin and a veil of green silk, the like of which for beauty I never beheld. And I said, 'O Rabia! what has become of the gown in which I shrouded thee, and of the woollen veil?' To which she answered, 'By Allah! it was taken off me, and I received in exchange what thou seest on me; my shroud was folded up, a seal was put upon it, and it was taken up to the highest heaven, that by it my reward might be complete on the day of resurrection.' 'It was for this,' I observed, 'that thou didst work when in the world?' 'And what is this,' she rejoined, 'compared with what I saw of Almighty God's bounty to his saints!' I then asked her in what state was Obaida,* the daughter of Abou Kallah, and she replied, 'It cannot be described! by Allah! she

* A celestial saint, who wept for her sins during forty years, and then lost her sight.

has surpassed us, and reached the highest place in Paradise.' 'And how so?' said I, 'when the people considered thee far, far above her.' To which she answered, 'Because, when in the world, she cared not what her state might be on the next morning, or the next night!' 'And what doeth Abou Malik Daigham?' 'He visiteth Almighty God when he pleaseth.' 'And Bishr ibn Manour?' 'Admirable, admirable! he hath received a recompense far beyond his hopes.' I then said to her, 'Tell me a means by which I may approach nearer to Almighty God.' And she answered, 'Think on him often, and by that, thou wilt, after a little while, be happy in thy tomb.'"

Another eminent saint of the same day began life as a highway robber. This was Abou Ali al Fudail. The story of his conversion is as follows. He was one night climbing over a wall to see a girl whom he loved, when he heard a voice pronounce this verse of the Koran: *Is not the time yet come unto those who believe that their hearts should humbly submit to the admonition of God?* On this he exclaimed, "O Lord! the time is come." He then went away from the place, and the approach of night induced him to repair for shelter to a ruined edifice. He there found a band of travellers, one of whom said to the others, "Let us set out;" but another answered, "Let us rather wait till daylight, for al Fudail is on the road, and will stop us." Al Fudail then turned his heart to God, and assured them that they had nothing to fear. He ranked among the greatest of saints. Many are the stories related of him. Thus it is said the khalif Haroun al Rashid once

said to him, "How great is thy self-abnegation!" To which he made answer, "Thine is greater." "How so?" said the khalif. "Because I make abnegation of this world, and thou makest abnegation of the next. Now, this world is transitory, and the next will endure for ever." It was, again, a saying of his that when God loves a man, he increases his afflictions, and when he hates a man, he increases his worldly prosperity. Another saying of his was, "If the world, with all it contains, were offered to me even on the condition of my not being taken to an account for it, I should shun it as you would shun a carrion, lest it should defile your clothes." "The display of devotional works to please men is hypocrisy; and acts of devotion done to please men are acts of polytheism."

A third example of what may be regarded as the orthodox Muhammadan mystic, is Zu'n-nun al Misri. He was a native of Nubia, an enfranchised slave, and adopted by the tribe of Kuraish. He was the first person of the age for his learning in the law and Traditions, his devotion, his communion with the Divinity, and his acquaintance with literature; and he is remembered as one of those who taught from memory "The Beaten Path" of the Imam Malek. On being asked why he had renounced the world, he replied, "I went forth from Misr, journeying to a certain village, and I fell asleep in one of the deserts on the way. And my eye was opened, and, lo! a little bird, still blind, fell from its nest to the ground. Then the ground split open, and two trays came forth, one of gold, and the other of silver; in one [illegible] ame, and in the other

water; and the bird eat of that and drank of this. 'That,' said I, 'is a sufficient warning for me; I renounce the world!' And I then did not quit the door of Divine mercy until I was let in."* Having been denounced by his enemies to the khalif al Mutawakhil, he was cited from Egypt to appear before him. He was dragged, handcuffed and fettered, through the streets of Mekka, where the khalif was at the time; and as the people thronged round him, weeping and lamenting, he was heard to say, "This is one of the gifts and favours of God; all He does

* Stories like the above are not infrequent in Muhammadan history. The following has always appeared to me to be a quaint and pathetic example: "Ibn Babshad, the greatest grammarian of his time of Egypt, held a place in the Chancery office, which, at length, he gave up owing to the following circumstance. Being one day on the roof of the mosque at Old Cairo with some other persons, eating a collation, a cat went over to them, and they gave it a bit of meat. The animal took it into its mouth and went off, but soon returned again, on which they threw another morsel to it. This it carried off also; and it kept going and coming a great number of times, at each of which it received from them another bit. Struck with this singularity, and knowing that no single cat could eat all they had given, they suspected something extraordinary, and followed the animal. They then saw it clamber over a wall on the roof, and go down into an empty space like an abandoned room. There they found another cat, but blind, eating of the food which had been brought to it and set before it by its companion. They were much struck by this, and Ibn Babshad said, 'Since God has caused this dumb animal to be served and fed by another cat, and has not withheld from it nourishment, how could He let a human being such as I am perish of hunger?' He immediately broke off all the ties which bound him to the world; he gave up his place, renounced his salary, and shut himself up in a chamber, where he pursued his studies in the full confidence that God would provide for him. His friends then took care of him, and supported him till he died."—*Ibn Khall.*, vol. i., p. 618.

is sweet, right, and good." He then recited these lines:—

"For thee, my beloved, is a reserved place in my heart; I despise all blame cast on me for loving thee. For thy sake, I strive to fall thy victim; to support thy absence is a task not possible."

When brought into the presence of the khalif, Zu'n-nun began a pious exhortation, which had such an effect on al Mutawakhil that he shed tears and dismissed him honourably. And, henceforth, whenever men of piety were spoken of in his presence, the khalif would weep and say, "Speaking of pious men, let me have Zu'n-nun."

In these, its early stages, this Moslem mysticism was a potent element of good. It rebuked the passionate worldliness evoked by the doctrine of Fatalism and the terrible uncertainty of life. The uplifted arm of unrighteous power, about to strike its innocent victim, was not unfrequently arrested at the rebuke of one of these ascetics. In his worn and emaciated form the khalif perceived the indications of a Power mightier than his own. But it is obvious that the mystics could exercise this beneficent influence only so long as their doctrines were based on the Koran and the Traditions. And this foundation it was not possible for them long to preserve. The idea having been admitted that there was an identity of essence between God and man, it became increasingly difficult to allot to either a distinct and independent existence. First, the external world vanished into the abyss of Pantheism. The whole visible creation became merely a manifestation of that

Divine Being whose spirit, diffused and interpenetrated through every part, renews its beauty and splendour from day to day. The personality of man swiftly followed. The doctrine of relativity was applied in order to reduce it to a mere phantom. Colours, it was argued, have no objective existence. They are the result of the constitution of the eye. Destroy the organ of vision, and the varied colouring of Nature would perish also. So also with heat and cold, hardness and softness. These are merely relative qualities —modes of our consciousness, not attributes having a reality in themselves. In like manner, it is the power of perception which occasions the separation of ourselves from the world. Destroy this power, and the universe is immediately restored to its proper and original unity. When a man sleeps, the external world ceases to have an existence for him, except through the medium of the imagination; and likewise, when a man awakes, but for his faculty of perception he would be unable to divide himself from the world. Destroy that faculty, and the universe perishes with it. God alone exists.

This development of the earlier mysticism appears to have first been taught in Baghdad towards the close of the second century after the flight. Its teacher was a man of humble origin; and the name by which he is remembered in history is "Al Hallaj," or *The Woolcarder*. Among the sayings recorded of him, as peculiar to his teaching, are these:—"*I am the Truth. There is nought in Paradise but God. I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I; we are two souls dwell-*

*ing in one body.* When thou seest me, thou seest Him; and when thou seest Him, thou seest me." Al Hallaj's preaching made so many converts in Baghdad that he aroused the hatred and jealousy of the orthodox doctors. And they resolved to extirpate the growing heresy, by destroying the root of it. Al Hallaj was summoned before Hamd ibn al Abbas, the vizier of al Muktadir, the reigning khalif at the time, and examined on the subject of his religious teaching. At the close of his reply, the orthodox doctors who were present appended their signatures to a *fatwa*, or declaration, which affirmed that he merited death; and he was thrown into prison. The vizier then informed the khalif by letter of the result of the meeting, and sent him the decision of the doctors. To this, answer was made that since the kadis had given their opinion that al Hallaj merited death, he was to be handed over to the chief of the police guards; that functionary was to inflict upon him a thousand strokes of a whip; and if his death did not ensue, a second thousand, and that he should then behead him. The vizier summoned the chief of the police, and after communicating to him the orders of the khalif, he added, "If al Hallaj does not expire under the bastinado, cut off one of his hands, then one of his feet, then the other hand, then the other foot; then strike off his head, and burn his body. And if he try to beguile you, and say to you that he will make the Euphrates and Tigris run gold and silver, do not hearken to him, nor suspend his punishment." The chief of the police received the prisoner that night, and the next morning, which was

Tuesday, 23rd Zulkada, A.H. 309 (March, A.D. 922), he brought him to the "Gate of the Dome," where an immense multitude of people was assembled. The executioner inflicted one thousand strokes on al Hallaj, who did not utter a groan, but said to the chief of the police guards, towards the six hundredth, "Let me be brought near you, for I have an advice to give you which will be worth the capture of Constantinople." "I have been already told," replied the other, "that you would say this, and more; and it is not in my power to suspend your punishment." After the infliction of the bastinado, his four limbs were cut off; he was then beheaded; his body was consumed by fire; the ashes cast into the Tigris; and his head was stuck up on the bridge across the river, as a warning to all who might feel inclined to fall into the same mischievous heresy.

This terrible martyrdom did not produce the effect intended. The followers of al Hallaj were not disheartened by the loss of their leader, nor dismayed by his cruel death. And a great inundation of the Tigris, which greatly damaged the city, occurring soon after his death, they affirmed that it was caused by his ashes, which had been thrown into the river. The yearning for absorption into the Deity became a sort of fanaticism. The very vizier of the khalif al Muktadir was infected with this heresy. The congregation of one of the Baghdad mosques was scandalized by the entrance of a man, stark naked, and shouting out, "I am mad through the love of God!" And it soon became apparent to the orthodox party that a fresh example

must be made, if they were not prepared to allow this alarming heresy to flourish unchecked. The mantle of al Hallaj had descended upon a certain Muhammad ibn Ali as Shalmaghani. This man taught the transmigration of souls, and the residence of the Divinity in himself. Search was made for him; but for several years he contrived to evade his pursuers, until, having ventured to enter Baghdad, he was arrested and imprisoned. This occurred A.H. 322 (A.D. 934). His place of residence was searched, letters and other documents were discovered, written by persons who professed to believe in his doctrines, and who applied to him epithets such as no mortal would use when addressing another. These letters were produced to as Shalmaghani, who admitted that they were addressed to him, but denied that he held the doctrines of which he was accused. Two of his disciples, Ibn Abi Aun, and Ibn Abdus, were confronted with him, and ordered by the khalif to strike him on the cheek. The latter did so; but the hand of the former trembled violently as it approached the face of the teacher, and instead of striking, Ibn Abi Aun exclaimed, with deep emotion, kissing at the same time the beard of Ibn as Shalmaghani, "My God! my Lord! thou who givest me sustenance!" The khalif ar Rhadi, horrified at this blasphemy, turned in anger to Ibn as Shalmaghani. "You pretend," he said, "that you did not pass yourself for the Divinity; what does this mean?" Ibn as Shalmaghani replied, "I am not responsible for the words of Ibn Abi Aun; God knows I never told him I was a God." They were afterwards brought forth a

number of times, and examined in the presence of the doctors of the law and the kadis. The final result was that Ibn Abdus was acquitted; but Ibn as Shalmaghani was publicly burned as a heretic; and his follower, Ibn Abi Aun, first severely scourged, and then beheaded, and his body, after exposure on a cross, was burned by fire.

But the movement had by this time become too strong to be checked by intermittent acts of severity. The only effectual barriers against this species of mysticism are national life and civic freedom. These bind Past and Future together; they evoke in men faith in a progressive order, having its roots far back in the ages, and "breathed upon by Hope's perpetual breath;" and morbid dreams of an unreal phantasmal world disappear before the fact of permanence and the existence of law. But in Muhammadan Asia there was no permanence, and consequently no progress. Nothing was constant except a principle of change. There seemed to be no right and no wrong; only a mad expenditure of fruitless energy—a frantic struggle for power where *chance* was the only law. And thoughtful and devout men, looking forth on the unceasing and purposeless turmoil, boldly pronounced the whole wild chaos an illusion. Man, they said, is an emanation from the Deity; and the unrest and discomfort he feels upon earth are the throes of the Divine life within him, striving for deliverance from this prison-house of flesh. Those who are ignorant of this truth vainly seek to satisfy their spiritual wants by the acquisition of fame, power, wealth, or pleasure. In the search after these

phantoms, they fill the earth with mourning, bloodshed, and misery; and at the end are farther off from the true object of man's existence than when they started upon their career. That object is to lose all consciousness of individual existence—to sink in the ocean of Divine Life, as a breaking bubble is merged into the stream on the surface of which it has for a moment arisen. For those who devote themselves to this end there is gradually created a new heaven and a new earth. The sorrowful things about them cease to give pain; and the beautiful become informed with a diviner beauty.

The spread of this Pantheistic spirit has been and is the source of incalculable evil throughout the Muhammadan world. The true function of religion is to vivify and illuminate all the ordinary relations of life with light from a higher world. The weakness to which religious minds are peculiarly prone is to suppose that this world of working life is an atmosphere too gross and impure for them to live in. They crave for better bread than can be made from wheat. They attempt to fashion a world for themselves, where nothing shall soil the purity of the soul or disturb the serenity of their thoughts. The divorce thus effected between the religious life and the worldly life is disastrous to both. The ordinary relations of men become emptied of all Divine significance. They are considered as the symbols of bondage to the world or to an evil deity. The religious spirit dwindles down to a selfish desire to acquire a felicity from which the children of this world are hopelessly excluded. Pre-

eminently has this been the result of Muhammadan mysticism. It has dug a deep gulf between those who can know God and those who must wander in darkness, feeding upon the husks of rites and ceremonies. It has affirmed with emphasis that only by a complete renunciation of the world is it possible to attain the true end of man's existence. Thus all the best and purest natures—the men who might have put a soul in the decaying Church of Islam—have been drawn off from their proper task, to wander about in deserts and solitary places, or expend their lives in idle and profitless passivity, disguised under the title of "spiritual contemplation."

But this has only been a part of the evil. The logical result of Pantheism is the destruction of a moral law. If God be all in all, and man's apparent individuality a delusion of the perceptive faculty, there exists no will which can act, no conscience which can reprove or applaud. The individual is but a momentary seeming; he comes and goes like "the snowflake on the river, a moment seen, then gone for ever." To reproach such an ephemeral creature for being the slave of its passions, is to chide the thistledown for yielding to the violence of the wind. Muhammadans have not been slow to discover these consequences. Thousands of reckless and profligate spirits have entered the Orders of the Durweshes, to enjoy the licence thereby obtained. Their affectation of piety is simply a cloak for the practice of sensuality; their emancipation from the ritual of Islam involves a liberation also from its moral restraints. And thus a movement, animated at

its outset by a high and lofty purpose, has degenerated into a fruitful source of ill. The stream which ought to have expanded into a fertilising river, has become a vast swamp, exhaling vapours charged with disease and death.

# CHAPTER IV.

## THE "FREE-THINKERS."

A.D. 632—850.

IN "Islam under the Arabs," I have described the character attributed to the Koran by Muhammadan divines in the following passage:—"According to Muhammadan divines, the Koran is in itself the greatest of all miracles. In most cases, they say, miracles have not occurred at one and the same time with the revelations committed to the Prophet. They have been intended to confirm and bear witness to the revelations, and have in consequence been subsequent to the Divine message. But the Koran is a miracle and revelation in one."

"It is otherwise with regard to the Pentateuch, the Evangel, and other Divine books; they are revelations received under the form of ideas. When the writers of these books returned from the ecstatic state to the normal human condition, they clothed the revelations they had received in their own language. And, consequently, in the style of these books there is nothing miraculous. But not so in the case of the Koran. The actual text of the Koran

came to the Prophet through the ear, as is shown by the following, among other passages:—

'Move not thy tongue in haste to follow and master this revelation;
For we will see to the collecting and the recital of it;
*But when we have recited it,* then follow thou the recital,
And verily afterwards it shall be ours to make it clear to thee.'
Sura lxxv. 16—19.

"These verses were communicated to the Prophet to quiet the anxiety he manifested to fix by constant repetition the words of the Koran in his memory. There are many other like passages which clearly show that the Koran was made known to the Prophet under the form of a reading delivered in a high voice; and thus every line of the Koran is a miraculous revelation of Divine eloquence surpassing the power of men." (Pp. 291, 292.)

The notion even, of theology, as a science, was of course wholly absent from the minds of the earliest followers of the Prophet. They, naturally enough, supposed there could be no disputes regarding the meaning of a revelation couched in the speech familiar to them all. Their primary anxiety was not to understand the Koran aright, but to repeat it with the correct pronunciation. How had the Archangel pronounced these words when reciting them to the Prophet? His pronunciation must, of necessity, be the manner in which Arabic was spoken in the presence of the Almighty; and, consequently, the type and exemplar according to which the Koran was to be recited. Now the only man who was acquainted with

this—the Divine method of pronouncing the Arabic language—was the Prophet himself. Consequently, one of the first duties which the devout among the earliest Moslems set themselves to do, was to learn to repeat the Koran under the tuition of the Prophet. Such men are styled in Muhammadan history "Koran Readers;" and became, indirectly, the parents of Muhammadan theology. The earliest "Koran Readers" were the first four Khalifs, and ten of the chief among the Companions. But among these, four were pre-eminent. They were—

*Abou ibn Kab*, called "The Master of the Koran Readers," because he had read the Koran in the hearing of the Prophet, who had said, in reference to him, "Read the Koran under Abou ibn Kab."

*Ibn Mesud*, one of the combatants at Bedr, who embraced Islam before Omar, and was wont to read the Koran in the presence of the Prophet. He had charge of the shoes and the toothpick of the Prophet, and was his confidential friend and adviser, and in constant attendance upon him. Seventy suras of the Koran he is said to have learned by heart direct from the mouth of Muhammad. None knew as he did to read the sacred book with the correct inflections and modulations of the voice; while from his close personal relation to the Prophet, he knew not merely the occasion of every sura, but the time and place of its revelation.

*Abou Mousa al Ashari.* He received and wrote down the Koran from the dictation of the Prophet, and read it in so sweet and musical a voice that Muhammad,

enchanted by the sound, declared with enthusiasm that the harp of David had been given to him.

*Abou'l Dorda*, known as "The Wise among the Readers." On the capture of Damascus he was appointed judge in that city; and every morning, after prayers, he took his seat in the "Mihrab" of the Mosque in order to give instruction in the reading of the Koran. Sixteen hundred readers were in this way instructed by him.

By such men the knowledge of the "correct" reading of the Koran was disseminated through Islam. To acquire this "correct" reading was incumbent upon every true believer. Every effort was made to preserve throughout the Muhammadan world an uniform pronunciation; but it is needless to say that these efforts failed of success. The immense extent of the khalifate, the diverse languages included within its sway told, of course, on the pronunciation of the sacred language. To the great consternation of the orthodox, instead of one, there arose seven distinct methods of reading the Koran, all reposing, as those who practised them declared, on the authority of Companions, whose knowledge and dexterity could not be disputed. The endeavour after uniformity having failed, nothing remained but to consecrate diversity by means of the usual device. The following Tradition was fathered upon Abou ibn Kab: "I was in the Mosque, and a man came in performing his prayers, and read in a dialect which I had forbidden him. After that another man came in and read in another dialect; and when we had finished prayers we all came to the Prophet; and

I said, 'This man repeated in a dialect which I objected to, and another man came in and repeated in a different dialect.' Then the Prophet ordered the two men to repeat over again; which they did, and his Highness praised them both. Then a doubt arose in my mind on account of the Prophet's praising both readings; and I had not this doubt when I was in ignorance; and when the Prophet perceived it, he struck his hands upon my breast, and perspiration ran from me, and I was in such a state, that you might say I saw God from fear. And his Highness said to me, 'O Abou ibn Kab! intelligence was sent to me to read the Koran in one dialect, and I was attentive to the Court of God, and said, "Make easy the reading of the Koran to my sects." Then instructions were sent to me a second time, saying, "Read the Koran in two dialects." Then I turned myself to the Court of God, saying, "Make easy the reading of the Koran to my sects." Then a voice was sent to me a third time, saying, "Read the Koran in seven dialects."'"

The difficulty of the diverse readings was thus happily removed, to the entire satisfaction of all devout and reasonable Moslems.

The discovery that the Prophet had foreseen and obtained a Divine sanction for these variations became an additional proof of the supernatural character of his teaching. Koran reading, according to the seven methods, became thenceforth a part of the education of any Moslem who aspired to a reputation for learning. But this speedily ceased to suffice for the wants of the Faithful. Men from every people under heaven were

crowding into the Church of Islam. To these new comers Arabic was an unknown tongue, and the Koran a fount of unintelligible wisdom. The Arabic itself was, every day, becoming more and more corrupted by the contact with foreign languages. Very soon all that generation who had seen and lived with the Prophet would have followed him to the grave; with them would perish the understanding of the sacred writings, and the world would sink back into the darkness from which the last and greatest of the Prophets had rescued it for a few brief years. To avert this tremendous catastrophe, a voluminous literature was rapidly developed, devoted to the exposition of the Koran. This literature may be classified under two heads, Philological and Traditional. The object of the first was to construct a grammar of the Arabic language; and to seek in the abundant poetry of pre-Islamite Arabia, for words, phrases, and idioms which would clear up obscure and difficult passages in the Koran. The object of the second was to collect and preserve in writing the authoritative expositions of the sacred text which had been handed down orally from the Companions of the Prophet.

The founder of the science of grammar was a certain Abou'l Aswad, an inhabitant of Basra. He was a partisan of the khalif Ali, and had fought in his armies throughout the series of engagements on the plains of Siffin. He thus relates how the idea of a grammar was suggested to him. "I once went in to the khalif Ali, and found him in deep reflection; on which I said to him, 'Commander of the Faithful,

what are you thinking of?' He answered, 'I heard in your town faults of language, and I wish to compose a book on the principles of Arabic?' I replied, 'If you do so, you will give us new life.' Some days afterwards I went to him, and he handed me a book, in which was this passage: '*The parts of speech are the noun, the verb, and the particle; the noun designates a thing which has a name, the verb indicates the motion of the thing which has a name, and the particle is that which is neither noun nor verb.*' He then told me to follow that up, and add to it the observations which might come into my mind. I therefore collected many and submitted them to him." These notes, however, he kept secret for some time after the death of the khalif Ali, though it was known that they were in his possession; but from the influx of foreigners into Basra, the Arabic language having become much corrupted, the governor of Basra sent orders to Abou'l Aswad to compose something which might serve as a guide to the public, and enable them to understand the Book of God. At first he asked to be excused, but having overheard a believer reciting the Koran, and committing mistakes in so doing, which profoundly shocked him, he set to work, and completed the first Arabic grammar.

Abdallah ibn Abbas, the earliest of the Koranic commentators, had also been the first to indicate the poetry of pre-Islamite Arabia as a key to the verbal obscurities of the Koran. He had himself a vast and accurate knowledge of that poetry; and it had been his custom to deliver lectures, which were attended by

enormous crowds, in which the language of the Koran was explained and illustrated by parallel examples taken from the poetry of the Arabs. The precedent, thus established, was everywhere accepted. Men set to work to store their minds with enormous quantities of verses which were held to throw light on the meaning of the sacred book. But this knowledge does not appear to have been committed to writing until the reign of the khalif Haroun al Rashid. According to his own account, the first person to write a book having this object in view was Abou Obaida, a native of Basra. He was of Persian extraction, and detested the Arabs of the desert so much that he composed a number of treatises devoted to abuse of them. He had so little power of *speaking* Arabic that he could not recite a verse without mangling it; and even in reading the Koran, with the book before his eyes, he made mistakes. But his knowledge of the unusual expressions in the Arabic language, the history of the ancient Arabs and their conflicts, surpassed that of all his contemporaries, and he thus relates the incident which induced him to apply his learning to the exposition of the Koran :—

"Al Fadhl ibn ar Rabi (the vizier of the khalif) sent to me at Basra the order to go and see him. So I set out, though I had been informed of his haughtiness. Being admitted into his presence, I found him in a very long and broad saloon, the floor of which was covered with a carpet of one single piece. At the upper end of the room was a pile of mattresses, so lofty that it could not be got upon

without a footstool, and on those mattresses al Fadhl was seated. I said to him, 'Hail to the vizier!' He returned my greeting, smiled on me, and bidding me draw near, he placed me on the same seat with himself. He then asked me sundry questions, and showed me such affability as set me quite at ease. At his request, I recited to him the finest ante-Islamite poems I could recollect. 'I know most of these,' said he; 'what I want is to hear gay verses.' I recited some to him, and as I proceeded he shook his sides, laughed, and got into an excellent humour. A well-looking man, in the dress of a *khatib*, then came in, and al Fadhl made him sit down beside me, and asked him if he knew me. On his reply that he did not, he said to him, 'This is Abou Obaida, the most learned man of Basra; we sent for him that we might derive some benefit from his learning.' 'May God bless you!' exclaimed the man; 'you did well.' Turning then towards me, he said, 'I have been longing to see you, as I have been asked a question which I wished to submit to you.' I replied, 'Let us hear it.' 'The Koran, which is the word of God,' said he, 'contains this passage—

> "It is a tree which cometh up from the bottom of hell,
> Its fruit is as it were the heads of demons."
> (Sura xxxvii. 62, 63.)

Now, we are all aware that, in promises and threats, the comparisons which are made should refer to things already known; yet no one knows what a demon's head is like.' To this I replied, 'God spoke there to

the Arabs in their own style; have you not heard the verse of Amr'l-Kais—

"Will he kill me? me whose bedfellows are a sword, and arrows pointed with azure steel like unto the fangs of ogres."

Now, the Arabs never saw an ogre, but as they stood in awe of such beings, they were often threatened with them.' Al Fadhl and the man who questioned me approved this answer, and on that very day I took the resolution of composing a treatise on the Koran, in explanation of this and similar difficulties, with every necessary elucidation. On my return to Basra I drew up the work, and entitled it *Al Majaz* (*Metaphors*)." *

Abou Obaida followed up this work by many others, such as treatises *On the unusual expressions employed in the Koran; On the rhetorical figures made use of in the Koran; On the rare expressions occurring in the Traditions; On the excellences of the throne of God*, and many others. He did not, however, do much to

* This story is a good illustration of the childish inquisitiveness of the Moslem character, demanding a reason for the merest trifles, and willing to receive any, however absurd, with perfect credence. Thus there is a Tradition on "the origin of salutations," which is as follows:—"When God created Adam, and blew a soul into him, Adam sneezed and said, 'Praise be to God!' and this he did by the aid and permission of God; and God said to Adam, 'God have mercy on thee!' And when God had taught Adam the rule of decency to be observed on sneezing, He wished to teach him that of the salaam, and said, 'O Adam! go to the angels who are sitting down, and say, "Peace be with you!" ' and he did so; and the angels said, 'Peace be with you, and the compassion of God!' After that Adam came to the place where he had talked with God, and God said, 'This is the way of your salutation, and of the salutation of thy children towards you and one another.' "

improve the principles of grammar, properly so called, because, as he said, "grammar brought ill luck." That work was accomplished by a contemporary of his, a Deilamite by origin, and a native of Koufa by birth. Yahya was his name, but in Muhammadan literature he is known as al Farra the Grammarian. "Were it not for al Farra," said an eminent grammarian of the same period, "pure Arabic would no longer exist; it was he who disengaged it from the ordinary language and fixed it by writing. Were it not for al Farra, good Arabic had gone to the ground. Before his time it was a matter of discussion; every one who pleased had the pretension of knowing, and discoursed on it as well as his genius and intelligence would permit, so that it had nearly disappeared." His great works were composed during the reign of the khalif Mamoun, who appointed him tutor to his two sons.

"When al Farra," so writes the khatib, in his history of Baghdad, "got acquainted with al Mamoun, the latter bid him draw up a work which should contain the principles of grammar and all the pure Arabic expressions which he had heard. He then ordered him to be confined in a chamber of the palace, and appointed male and female servants to attend him, and furnish him with everything he required; hoping, by this means, to deliver his heart from all preoccupations, and to leave him nothing to wish for. They were even to inform him of the hours of prayer, by chanting the call at the proper times. He sent to him also a number of copyists, and attached to his service con-

fidential men, and agents charged to pay the expenses. Al Farra then dictated, and the copyists wrote down his observations; and this continued during two years, until they had finished the work. . . . Al Mamoun ordered the book to be transcribed and placed in his libraries. When al Farra had finished his task, he went out in public, and began the composition of the *Kitab-al-Maâni* (*Rhetorical figures* employed in the Koran). The narrator of these facts says, "We tried to count the number of persons who assembled for the purpose of hearing him dictate the text of the *Kitab-al-Maâni*, but not being able to do so, they were so many, we counted the kadis only, and found that they were eighty. He continued to dictate the work till he finished it. The copyists then withheld it from the public, so that they might make money of it, and declared that they would not communicate it to any person, unless he consented to have it copied by them at the rate of one dirhem (*about sixpence*) for five leaves. Al Farra, to whom complaints were made on this subject, sent for the copyists and remonstrated with them. Their answer was, 'We attended your lessons in order to profit by your learning. Of all your works this is the most essential; so allow us to gain a livelihood by means of it.' He replied, 'Be more compliant with them; it will be for your advantage as well as theirs.' Finding they would not follow his advice, he said to them, 'I shall let you see what you do not expect;' and then announced to the public that he would dictate the *Maâni*, and join to it a complete commentary, with fuller remarks than those already given. He therefore

held sittings and dictated one hundred leaves on the word *al hamd.** The copyists then went to him, and said, 'We shall concede to the public what they demand, and copy for them at the rate of one dirhem for ten leaves.'"

The works of al Farra were, *On Dialectical expressions; On the nouns of action which are found in the Koran; On the plurals and duals which occur in the Koran*; *On the full stop and the commencement of phrases.* But notwithstanding these fruitful labours, the orthodox world was much troubled and perplexed as to the lawfulness of the study of grammar. No text could be discovered in the Koran which referred to grammar, nor among the vast host of Traditions could one be adduced which gave a sanction to this science. It might be that men were profanely interposing their private judgment in a matter where it had no business. The labours of Abou Obaida had been denounced by some on this very ground. This perplexity was removed through the agency of Abou'l Abbas Thalab, a pupil of al Farra, and a grammarian of distinguished ability. He is reported to have said to one of his pupils, when he felt the hand of death upon him, "O, Abou Bekr! the Koranists were taken up with the Koran, and obtained a happy reward; the Traditionists were taken up with the Traditions, and obtained a happy reward; the Doctors were taken up with the Law, and obtained a happy reward; I have been taken

* This is the first word of the expression which in Arabic means "Praise be to God!" and with which most Moslem books begin.

up with the science of grammar. Oh, that I knew what my state will be in the next world!" "After quitting him," says Abou Bekr, by whom the anecdote has been preserved, "I had a vision in my sleep that very night, and I saw the blessed Prophet, who said to me, 'Give my greeting to Thalab, and say, "*Thou art master of the superior science.*"'" This convenient vision settled the question; and it was regarded as proving that the study of grammar was not merely lawful, but praiseworthy.*

The other, or Traditional branch of exegesis, deals with the interpretation of the sacred text. The Koran is divided into *Suras*, or chapters; but the reader must not suppose that each chapter came down as a separate revelation in its present form. On the contrary, it was revealed in fragments—a few verses at a time—

* A list of the chief works of Thalab will serve to give a very clear idea of the subjects discussed by these grammarians: A Treatise on Grammar; Points on which Grammarians disagree; On the Idiomatic Expressions peculiar to the Koran; The Differences which exist between the Seven Readings of the Koran; On the usual Ideas found in the Poems of the ancient Arabs; On the Confidence to be placed in the Ancients; On the parsing of the Koran; The Limits of Grammar. Mr. Browning's well-known poem might be applied with perfect truth to these grammatical enthusiasts. Many of them died, as did his Grammarian—

"So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;
Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife,
While he could stammer.

He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!
Properly based *Oun*.
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down."

accordingly as the occasion required.* Later passages there are, too, which annul passages which preceded them; and verses which contain a hidden meaning

* The Traditions furnish numerous examples of this fact. I quote a few as illustrations. *Ibn Abbas* said, "*When these revelations came down, 'Meddle not with the substance of the orphan, otherwise than for the improving thereof'* (Sura vi. 152); and, *Surely they who devour the possessions of orphans unjustly, shall swallow down nothing but fire into their bellies, and shall boil in raging flames* (Sura iv. 9).—All those who had orphans in their care went home, and separated their own food from that of the orphans, and also their water, fearful lest they might be mixed. Then, when the orphans left any of their meat or drink, it was taken care of, for them to eat afterwards, or spoilt. Then this method was unpleasant to the orphans, and they mentioned it to the Prophet; then God sent down this revelation: '*O Muhammad! they will ask thee concerning orphans; answer,* "*To deal righteously with them is best; and if ye mix your things with theirs, verily they are your brethren*" (Sura ii. 221). Then they mixed their meat and drink together.'"

*Ayesha* said, "I was reflecting on those women who had given themselves to the Prophet, and said, 'What! does a woman give herself away?' Then, when this revelation descended, '*Thou mayest postpone the turn of such of thy wives as thou shalt please, in being called to thy bed; and thou mayest take unto thee her whom thou shalt please, and her whom thou shalt desire of those whom thou shalt before have rejected; and it shall be no crime in thee,*' I said, 'I see nothing in which your God doth not hasten to please you; whatever you wish He doeth!'"

*Omar ibn al Khattab* said, "I accorded with my Cherisher (i.e., *God*) in three things. One is, that I said, 'O Messenger of God! if we were to say our prayers in Abraham's place it would be better.' Then this revelation came down, '*Take the place of Abraham for a place of prayer.*' The second is, that I said, 'O Messenger of God! good and bad people come to your house; and I do not see that it is fitting; therefore, if you order your women to be shut up it will be better.' Then the revelation for doing so came down. The third is, that his majesty's wives were all agreed in a story about his drinking honey; and he had vowed never to eat it any more. Then I said to his majesty's wives, 'Should the

known, in the first instance, to the Prophet only, and communicated by him to his Companions. This he did in obedience to an injunction contained in the 46th verse of Sura xvi., which says, "To thee have we sent down this Book of Monition, *that thou mayest make clear to men what hath been sent down to them.*" The Koran, moreover, abounds in allusions to the wild stories current among the tribes regarding the history of pre-Islamite Arabia; it appropriates miraculous narratives from the Talmud and other Jewish sources; its ideas of Christianity are taken from some of the Apocryphal Gospels—Muhammad, it is clear, never having had access to any of the writings contained in the New Testament. But all this huge mass of error and fable, from the simple fact of being mentioned in the Koran, was immediately stamped in the eyes of all true Moslems, with the seal of Divine truth. It could no longer be questioned or doubted.

The key to all this multifarious information was supposed to reside in the minds of the Companions. They were the depositaries of a lore hidden from ordinary men. They knew the verses which *abrogated*, and those which *were abrogated;* they were acquainted with the circumstances that had evoked each revelation, and

Prophet divorce you, God would soon give him better in exchange.' Then a revelation came down, agreeing with what I said."

In the face of these Traditions so evidently true from their naturalness and simplicity, how absurd becomes the endeavour to make of Muhammad, at least in later days, a sublime Prophet, intoxicated with the love of God, and overwhelmed by a sense of His unapproachable majesty.

the exact purport of the different verses. They also were supposed to have been taught by the Prophet, the details of all occurrences, miraculous and historical, which are either set forth or referred to in the Koran. This knowledge they transmitted orally to their disciples—*the Tabis*—and these to the next generation, until the practice of writing superseded that of oral instruction. The function of a commentator on the Koran was to reproduce this information in as exact a form as he could. He was debarred from criticising it, except as regards the *ismad* or chain of authorities through which each ridiculous legend was transmitted. Provided the chain was sound, the story attached to the end of it needed no other evidence of its perfect accuracy. Thus a saying current among the learned in the science of Traditions is: "*A relation made by as Shafi on the authority of Malek, and by him on the authority of Nafê, and by him on the authority of Ibn Omar, is really the golden chain,*"—so exalted is the merit of each of these narrators.

The earliest Koranic commentator was Ibn Abbas, nephew of the Prophet. (Some account of him will be found at p. 306 of "Islam under the Arabs.") He revised his copy of the Koran with the advice and assistance of Zaid, who had collected and edited the official text; and he carried his labours so far that he numbered not merely the verses, but even the words and the letters of the sacred book; and the Faithful flocked in immense numbers to hear his lectures on the interpretation of the Koran. On the death of Ibn Abbas, his mantle descended upon Ikrima, a Berber

slave whom Ibn Abbas had sedulously and successfully educated. Ibn Abbas died without giving him his liberty, and his son Ali sold him for four thousand dinars. On this Ikrima sent to him and said, "There is no good in you; you have sold your father's learning for four thousand dinars." Ali was touched with remorse at this remark; he annulled the bargain, and gave Ikrima his liberty. Ikrima passed his life in travelling through the Muhammadan empire, giving lectures on the science of Koranic interpretation, and died at Medina, A.H. 107 (A.D. 725-6). After them came a numerous family of Koranic commentators, whom it is not necessary to designate by name. The most celebrated of them all is Jar Allah az Zamakhshari, a Persian, who was born A.H. 467 (A.D. 1075), at Zamakhshar, and died A.H. 538 (A.D. 1144).

According to these commentators, the theology of the Koran falls under two heads—"the perspicuous," and "the figurative" or the "obscure." The former constitute "the basis of the Book." The interpretation of the latter is known to God alone. This classification is held to be in accordance with the fifth verse of the third Sura, in which it is written—

"He (God) it is who hath sent down to thee 'the Book.' Some of these signs are of themselves *perspicuous;* these are *the basis of the Book,* and others are *figurative.* But they whose hearts are given to err follow its figures, craving discord, craving an interpretation; yet *none knoweth its interpretation but God.* And the stable in knowledge say, 'We believe in it, it is all from our Lord.' But none will bear this in mind save men endowed with understanding."

Now, the "figurative" or "obscure" passages of the Koran are those wherein the Deity speaks of Himself. According to the Koranic idea of the Deity, God, in virtue of His essence, is too highly elevated to be in any way like to the creatures He has made. For supposing such resemblance to exist, there would not be that difference in kind between God and the world implied in the power of creation. This, in Muhammadan theology, is technically termed "the doctrine of exemption." But, on the other hand, there are passages in the sacred writings which ascribe to God hands, eyes, a face, and feet, a tongue—all which are organs proper to the bodies of created beings. They ascribe to Him also such acts as sitting down and getting up, coming and going; while there is a Tradition wherein the Prophet declares, that on the day of Resurrection, the Faithful shall "*see*" God as clearly as they see the moon when at the full, and shall not be disappointed of the joy. Here, then, is what appears to be a manifest contradiction. In one place it is laid down that between man and God there is no similarity whatever; in others, God is invested with visibility, tangibility, and all the other attributes of human beings.

Again, the Koran declares that God is One. But it also ascribes to God a number of attributes. God is omnipotent, for otherwise the acts of His creatures could not accomplish themselves, seeing they derive all their energies from Him. God possesses volition, otherwise He could not have created the world out of nothing, nor produced one order of being rather than

another. God is omniscient, otherwise the events of coming ages would not be predestined according to His eternal and unchanging purpose. But granting the existence of these attributes, do they not destroy that other doctrine of the Unity of God? If co-eternal with God, do they not substitute the idea of plurality for that of unity? If coming into existence under the conditions of time, do they not involve the heresy that there was a time when God was not omniscient, omnipotent, or possessed of volition?

Passages which deal with these high mysteries are regarded as trials of the faith of the true Believer. Those whose hearts are given to err will court their own destruction by attempting to measure the fathomless abyss of the Divine Nature. But "the stable in knowledge" will be content to say, "We believe in it; it is all from our Lord." Such, at least, was the example set by the Companions. For while Traditions have been handed down in abundance, which give the responses of the Prophet to inquiries concerning prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage, there is not one having reference to the being and attributes of God. This is a fact acknowledged by all those most profoundly versed in Traditional lore. The Companions never dared to pry into that Holy of Holies wherein the personality of God is veiled. They believed, but presumed not to question or criticise; and such is the attitude of mind best befitting the devout and humble Believer. The great Imams of the Law were all at one regarding the danger and impiety of venturing to discuss the nature of the being of God.

The Imam as Shafi declared that any man employing his time in this way deserved to be fixed to a stake, and carried about through all the Arab tribes, with the following proclamation made before him—"*This is the reward of him who left the Koran and the Traditions for the study of scholastic theology.*" Ahmed ibn Hanbal declared that whoever moved his hand while he read these words from the Koran, "*I have created with my hand,*" ought to have his hand cut off; and whoever stretched forth his finger in repeating the saying of Muhammad, "*The heart of the Believer is between two fingers of the Merciful,*" deserved to have his finger cut off. Another eminent jurisconsult at Tirmidi, having been consulted about the saying of the Prophet, that God descended to the lowest of the seven heavens, replied, "The descent is intelligible, the manner how is unknown; the belief therein is obligatory; and the asking about it is a blameable innovation."

In all this we find the same spirit at work as in the Law and the Traditions. There is no knowledge possible for man except such as has been obtained direct from the Everlasting Table. Where this authority has decided, there all further discussion is unlawful. Where it has not penetrated, there it is impious to attempt to penetrate. This is the true spirit of Islam, an absolute and unquestioning surrender of the inner and the outer life to the commands of an external authority. A system such as this cannot but occasion external decay and mental imbecility wherever it prevails. But such were not and could not be the immediate results of the spread of Islam.

The nations received the poison into their veins, but their vital energies were not immediately destroyed. When the Arabs entered as conquerors into Alexandria, Damascus, and Antioch, they entered upon territory where, for six hundred years, the being and the attributes of the Deity had been a subject of passionate controversy. The converts from the Eastern Churches could acquiesce in political tyranny; but they could not acquiesce in the intellectual bondage enforced by Islam. They broke down the fences set up by the orthodox around the personality of God. They strove to illuminate with the light of reason the dry, hard doctrines of the new creed, and make room within it for the free play of thought. The (so-called) glories of Moslem civilization are coincident with this brief and hopeless endeavour. When it terminated in defeat and extinction, a darkness that could be felt descended upon the lands of the Prophet. But it has been the singular fate of his religion to be credited with producing those spiritual energies which, in truth, perished in a battle against it.

The peculiar doctrines of the Alides, and the rising up of a body of Free-thinkers even in the prison-house of Islam, are alike due to the influence of Eastern Christianity.

The belief in a Redeemer despised and rejected of men, coming again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory to establish an universal kingdom upon earth, was the central belief of all the sects of the Shias. Like the Christians' expectation of a Second Advent, this belief obtained its power over the mind

from the spectacle of the intolerable confusion and misery of the existing world. But if we advance a step further, and scrutinise more narrowly the character of these respective expectations, nothing can be more instructive than the differences they exhibit. They seem to me to reveal at a glance the explanation of the vast gulf which separates Christendom from Islam—the vigorous, progressive life of the one, the crumbling decrepitude of the other. Every reader of the Pauline Epistles is familiar with the great Apostle's reiterated denunciations of the hard tyranny of the Law. *The Law*, he says, *worketh wrath; where no law is, there is no transgression. Sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.* The glad news he had to proclaim to the world was emancipation from this hard tyranny. In the mind of the Moslem, also, there was the same ardent craving to be liberated from the hard tyranny of the Law; but there was also this profound difference. The God in whom the Apostle believed was a righteous God; the Law which held the Apostle in subjection was the expression of His character—it was holy, just, and good. Precisely because it was so, it had made known to his conscience, by force of contrast, how far he had fallen away from that holy, just, and righteous condition. Without this Law he had not known sin, as a man who had never seen the light would not comprehend the sensation of darkness. The freedom he longed after was not an abrogation of the Law, but the communication of a spiritual power enabling him to fulfil it to the uttermost. Such fulfilment was the only perfect free-

dom. Christ was the manifestation of this spiritual power. He it was who would set men free from the hard tyranny of the Law by the regeneration of their minds, so that their lives would spontaneously flow on in perfect harmony with it. The expectation of a Second Advent, as popularly understood, was the material presentation of the Pauline theology. Christ was to reign as a visible king; and everyone was to be perfectly happy, because everyone was to be perfectly good.

The God of the Moslem, on the contrary, was not a righteous God, but an arbitrary sovereign. I know that passages can be produced from the Koran wherein the righteousness of God is strongly insisted upon. But such passages have failed to mould to any great extent the practical religion of Islam, because (as I have already observed) the Koran is a book without moral gradations. Every institution and every precept stands upon the same ground—the will of God. The washings, and prostrations, and meaningless ceremonies of the Pilgrimage are of equal—nay, far greater—importance than the mental state of the Believer. Sin, according to repeated assertions of the Prophet, can literally be cleansed by washing, precisely as so much dirt. The inevitable result has been that, there being no moral or rational explanation why these particular rites and ceremonies were preferred to any other, the same arbitrary character was extended to the moral law also. Both were regarded as restrictions imposed upon men by God, from no higher motive than the possession of power to do so. The Law of Islam reflected the whims of a capricious despot; not,

as with the Christian Apostle, the image of a righteous will. The moral law was regarded as a tyrannous restraint on the natural impulses of men, precisely as the ceremonial law was a tyrannous tax on their physical endurance. The Christian prayed for a power enabling him to fulfil the Law; the Muhammadan for one to destroy it. Hence, to the Shia, the Advent of the Mehdi was the commencement of an era of lawless licence. Not only would prayers, fastings, and pilgrimages cease to be performed, but every moral restriction which limited the passions and desires of men would be snapped asunder. Consequently, every Shia uprising was an endeavour to pave the way for the utter degradation of men. In strict conformity with this view of man's ultimate destiny and the transitory character of the moral law, the Shias taught and practised the doctrine of *Takeea*—i.e., "guarding oneself." According to this doctrine, the Shia, in order to avoid persecution, may publicly profess any opinions he pleases. He may deny any or all of the special doctrines of his sect; he may profess himself to be an orthodox Muhammadan; nay, he may even curse the twelve Imams, and yet be considered blameless. The Shia and the Sunni divided the Muhammadan world between them; and there can be no stronger testimony of the corrupting power and the hard and hopeless bondage of the orthodox creed, than that men should escape from it into a system which established falsehood as the supreme law of conduct, and regarded the reduction of men to the level of swine as the goal of human existence.

The Free-thinkers of the Muhammadan Church trace back their origin to the labours of two men—Wasil ibn Atha and Amr ibn Obaid. The former was a man of Persian extraction, but born at Medina in the year 80 (A.D. 699-700). The latter was a native of Sind, and born in the same year as Wasil. He was a man remarkable for his piety and asceticism, and marked between his eyes with a callosity produced by his frequent prostrations in prayer. Hasan the Basrite, when questioned concerning him, said that he was a man who appeared to have been "educated by the angels and brought up by the prophets." Wasil ibn Atha and Amr ibn Obaid were close friends, and the origin of free-thought in the Muhammadan Church is referred back to the following incident. Hasan the Basrite was seated in the Mosque of Basra, surrounded by his friends and disciples, when a certain man entered, and said to him, "Imam of the Faith, a sect has sprung up in our time which considers as unbelievers those who have committed mortal sin, a mortal sin being, according to them, equivalent to infidelity; and there is another sect which considers a mortal sin of no consequence, provided that the sinner believes rightly. But what sayest thou?" While Hasan was meditating a response, Wasil rose up and said, "I maintain that a Muhammadan who has committed a mortal sin should be regarded neither as a believer nor an unbeliever, but as occupying a middle station between the two." Then he withdrew to another part of the Mosque while Hasan and his companions discussed the opinion he had given; and pre-

sently he was joined by Amr ibn Obaid and others. Shortly after, Katada, another of the learned men of Basra, entered the Mosque. Wasil and his friends were engaged in loud discussion, and Katada went over to them, thinking them to be of Hasan's party. On finding his mistake he left them, saying, "These are the *seceders (al motazila)*." And from that time they were called Motazilites, or Seceders.

The reasons on which Wasil based the opinion he enunciated were as follows:—Believer being a title of commendation, is one applicable to a good man only. Such an appellation, therefore, cannot be applied with justice to a Moslem who has been guilty of mortal sin; but neither can such an one be termed an unbeliever, because he believes, though his actions do not correspond with his profession of faith. He is, consequently, something unnameable, and midway between the two. Should he leave the world, unrepentant, he will go to hell and abide there for ever, seeing that in the world beyond the grave heaven and hell fill up the whole of space; but his torments will be less intense than those of the unbeliever in the ordinary sense of the term.

The inquiry thus started could not be arrested at this point. A difference in the *degree* of punishment opened the whole question of man's free will and moral responsibility. It brought the "Seceders," or Free-thinkers (as I shall in future call them) in direct conflict with the idea of Fate and the doctrine of Predestination. They rejected both: the first because it reduced man to a machine; the second because it

involved the impiety of making God the author of evil. "God," they said, "is the perfectly wise and righteous Being; evil and imperfection cannot come nigh Him. It is therefore impossible that He should cause man to commit that which is distasteful to Himself; or compel him to commit evil, and then punish him for so doing. There would be neither wisdom nor justice in such insensate tyranny as this." No., Man is master of his actions. God is not the author of them. Men may work good or evil in virtue of a power to will and to do incarnate in them. And they will be punished or rewarded in the next world, according as they have made use of this power in this.

This recognition of man's responsibility impelled the Free-thinkers to undertake another inquiry. What is the precise aim and scope of the revelation made to Muhammad? It is intended to show men the path to salvation. Granted. But apart from this revelation, do men possess no intimation of what the will of God is? Clearly they do. The sense of moral responsibility implies that men are under a law; which law, like the sense which testifies of it, must be universal. But if so, it would be a fatal deduction from the goodness of God unless He had made a knowledge of the nature of the obligation as universal as the obligation itself. Some knowledge of the will of God, therefore, is implied by the possession of a sense of moral responsibility. Following out this line of thought, the Free-thinkers arrived at the conclusion that a knowledge of good and evil is possible to all men by the unassisted reason and conscience; and that Revelation is merely a

confirmatory evidence of that previous knowledge, accorded by the grace of God, so that men may be wholly without excuse. Further, as against the doctrine that a sound belief extracts the poison out of sin, they asserted that to do good and eschew evil is binding upon the Moslem even more than upon other men, and may be imposed upon him by the sword. This, in truth, constituted the true *jehad*, seeing that there was no difference between war against the Infidel and war against the Muhammadan who wilfully transgressed the commandments of God.

Regarding the vexed question of the "Imamate," Wasil ibn Atha and his friends took up the same bold and independent position as upon other matters. They declared it to be quite possible that both Ali and his opponents, and Othman and his murderers, were actuated by conscientious motives. Doubtless, however, some of them were moved by worldly ambition, and a taint of worldliness probably had entered the minds of every one of them. Arguing accordingly, from the analogy of the courts of justice, in which, if two men are known to have cursed each other, the evidence of both is considered invalid, they proposed, as the safest thing to do, to put all four parties out of court. God and His Prophet had not, they said, designated any special Imam. To do so now was the privilege of the entire body of the Faithful; any other kind of election was imperfect and invalid. So long, therefore, as the Church was torn by internal dissensions, the office of Imam was necessarily in abeyance. They denied also that the Imam need be a member of

the tribe of Kuraish. Provided he was a true believer, his family origin was a matter of no importance. The sincerest and best Moslem was, spiritually, the Imam or leader of the Faithful, and therefore the man who ought to be elected to that office.

Finally, the followers of Amr ibn Obaid attacked the orthodox doctrine respecting the Koran. According to that doctrine, the Koran is the Word of God, co-eternal with Himself. It is the pure and perfect revelation of the Divine will. All that it contains is above criticism. The only right attitude of mind towards it is a complete and absolute submission, like that of a corpse in the hands of those who perform the last funeral rites upon it.

The Freethinkers protested against this intellectual servitude. The Word of God, they said (evidently inspired by the theology of the Fourth Gospel), must be the perfect manifestation of the essence of God. That Word is His creative power, by which He has made the worlds; and how is it possible that this living and creating Word should be confined within the leaves of a book, or identical with the sounds proceeding from the lips of Muhammad. The Prophet, without doubt, had possessed a clearer intuition of the Divine will, than was the privilege of other men; but this knowledge he had expressed in his own words; and these words, like all the works of men, were tainted with error and imperfection. The later Freethinkers went further even than this. They asserted there was nothing specially marvellous in the Koran, considered as an effort of human genius. If the Arabs had not

been awed by the supernatural character they superstitiously attached to it, there were many of their poets who might have surpassed it in poetic vigour and correctness of speech. These intrepid thinkers did not even spare the character of the Prophet. They asserted it to be far from perfect; denounced in particular his inordinate sensuality, and the number of his wives; and singled out a man of their own time, who, they said, had reached a far higher level of moral excellence.

Opinions such as these would seem, at first sight, to carry within them the germs of progress and enlightenment. And yet it is a melancholy fact that they have perished in the Muhammadan Church, and left not a trace of their existence behind them. The explanation of this strange fact is to be sought for in the moral and intellectual condition of Eastern Christianity at the era of the Muhammadan Conquest. All religions, at the moment of their birth, are manifestations of spiritual power. Men become aware of an influence which is creating a new life within them, and calling into activity aspirations and energies that have long lain dormant. This power they ascribe to God. To whom else could they ascribe it? For it is one proceeding from no visible source, and penetrating to the secret chambers of the mind, to purify, elevate, and enlighten. At the same instant it reveals the degradation of evil, and imparts the capacity to rise above it. Faith and conduct are wedded together. Thus, when Paul told the early Churches that they were justified by faith or sanctified by the power of

the Holy Spirit, he was not thinking of propositions in a system of theology. He spoke of *facts*. He and those to whom he spoke, knew that they had risen above the level of their past moral condition by this new-born faith in God as their friend and helper; they felt within them the purifying presence of a spirit of holiness; and they no more needed an explanation of these phrases, than they required an explanation before perceiving that fire was hot and ice cold. Their thoughts travelled, immediately beyond the phrase, to the fact denoted. These are the productive periods of the world's history, when the foundations of a new order of things are laid. But the period of critical analysis follows hard upon its footsteps. The new life becomes a past experience to be held at a distance, and weighed, analysed, and discussed. There have been, according to the hypothesis, two factors at work in its production. What part, then, is God's, and what belongs to man? With this inquiry, unreflecting faith is deposed, and the era of theology has commenced. Henceforth, if both can work together in harmony, all will be well; but only then. A faith divorced from the intellect degenerates either into ritualism or mysticism; an intellectual theology divorced from conduct becomes a collection of sterile notions about God. Such are the Scylla and Charybdis which perpetually threaten the vessel of the Church. The theology of Clement and of Origen had been an inductive theology. Their object was, to seek and discover in all the acts and thoughts of men the presence of that Light which lighteth every man. A theology such as this was in

little danger of being divorced from conduct; because it was in the conduct of men that it looked for the evidences of its truth. But with the lapse of time, a very different theology had obtained possession of the Eastern Churches. In place of a living, loving, and working God being regarded as the central point of the Christian faith, a false centre had been posited—a speculative definition of the idea of God. The essence of Christianity consisted, not in a life of holiness, but in the reception of this speculative definition. Thus the connection between faith and practice had been severed. Christian ecclesiastics could contemplate unmoved the profligacy and cruelty of the Byzantine Court. But those who denied the existence of the two natures in Christ, or went astray in some other incomprehensible subtlety of the same kind—these they were ready and implacable to hunt to death. For such a cause cities were burned, and rich provinces changed into deserts filled with a noise of wailing. Eastern Christianity had thus been parted into three divisions, each existing apart from the others, and all of them wholly lacking in life-giving power. For the many, Christianity was a routine of rites and ceremonies, the efficacy of which depended upon their careful and accurate performance; for the devout, Christianity consisted in a renunciation of the world, and seclusion in some monastic cloister; for the intellectual few, Christianity was an ontological system, to be proved by the logic of Aristotle, and enforced by the secular arm.

Similar ideas of religion were, naturally, held by the Free-thinkers of the Muhammadan Church.

They were, necessarily, the children of their age, subject to the prevailing intellectual tendencies of the time. They, no more than the Christian ecclesiastics, grasped the idea of establishing a harmony between thought and action. Hence they never raised a protesting voice against the unmeaning ritualism of the popular religion. They acquiesced in the crushing tyranny of the khalifate. When they had the power, they gladly availed themselves of the secular arm to enforce submission to their opinions. They had no thought of regenerating society, no gospel they desired to preach to men; theirs was a controversy fought out in the schools of theology, and which never went beyond them. Consequently, when Orthodoxy resumed possession of the territory from which for a time it had been expelled, it found all things as they had been previous to its expulsion. The popular heart had remained untouched. The Free-thinkers had left no traces of themselves, except in the controversial treatises which they had written. These were destroyed, and with their destruction the last vestiges of the conflict between Free-thought and the spirit of Islam were obliterated. The story of this conflict has now to be told.

# PART II.

# THE RULE OF THE PERSIANS.

# CHAPTER I.

## THE PERSIAN AND THE ARAB.

A.D. 749—786.

THE old Sassanian Empire overthrown by the Arabs was a Persian despotism: But between the Government officials and the body of the people there existed a numerous and powerful landed aristocracy. These landed proprietors were termed "Dihkans." They were the heads of the village communities; and in all matters regarding the internal relations of these communities they had a decisive voice. They were the guardians of their interests; they were responsible for the proper distribution and collection of the land revenue; they could protest against tyranny or undue exactions on the part of the provincial or even the central government; and necessarily possessed an enormous influence over the cultivating classes. On the overthrow of the Sassanian dynasty, this influential class succeeded in preserving both their wealth and their local influence by a timely conversion to the new creed. Their conversion saved their estates from confiscation; and the Arabs had no other alternative but to employ them in the assessment and collection of the

land tax. These "Dihkans" are frequently mentioned by the early Arab writers. They were remarkable for their splendid and lavish hospitality, for the excellence of the vintage in their cellars, and, above all, for the beauty of their daughters. The devout Moslem deemed himself a lucky man who obtained one of these "fairy-limbed gazelles" * for his bride.

Nevertheless, between them and the Arabs there was bitter hatred and perpetual rivalry. The exciting cause of this was the intolerable arrogance of the latter. In the Koran it is repeatedly laid down that all believers are to regard each other as brethren, and that there are to be no distinctions of rank among them. This the Arabs could not bring themselves to concede. They were, in their own eyes, the most glorious and magnificent beings to be found on the surface of the earth; and, in comparison with them, all other nations were as the dust beneath their feet. The advanced state of civilisation attained by Persia and Byzantium, as compared with their own ignorance and barbarism, in no way diminished this exalted estimate of themselves. They had a theory which accounted for it. Their forefathers, so they affirmed, endowed by God with sublime aspirations, and sedulous to preserve themselves untainted from shame of every

* "Go, breeze, and gently tell
Yon fairy-limbed gazelle,
O'er mountain and through valley we follow, and are faint.
Is it the pride that glows
In the bosom of the rose,
That makes her never heed the nightingale's complaint."
*Hafiz.*

description, had seriously weighed the question as to where and how they should live. After mature deliberation, they had arrived at the conviction that the sedentary life of men in cities was adverse to the nobility of human nature. Only in the freedom and pure air of the desert could that nature be brought to its highest perfection. They had, therefore, chosen the latter; and the matchless excellences of the Arab testified to the wisdom of their choice. In virtue of the elevating power of this desert life, the Arabs surpassed all other nations in the vigour of their character, the power of their imagination, the generosity and nobility of their thoughts, and the strength and beauty of their bodies. They were "the travellers of the night, the lions of the battle, the genii of the desert, and the hosts of the solitudes." It was a further proof of this manifest superiority, that God had selected from among them the greatest and last of all his Prophets, that the Arabic language was spoken in heaven, and that the Temple at Mekka had been declared to be a centre of worship and holiness for all the nations of the universe.

The Persians, in whom the pride of ancestry and the sense of their personal excellence was hardly less extreme than in the Arabs, bitterly resented this assumption of superiority. They invented a genealogy for themselves, for the express purpose of confounding the arrogance of their conquerors. They asserted themselves to be descended from Isaac, the son of Abraham. They taunted the Arabs as the children of a mere concubine, whereas they were the true and

legitimate representatives of Abraham and Sara. They denied that Ishmael, the father of the Arabs, had ever been thought worthy of being offered up as a sacrifice to God, as the Arabs supposed. It was Isaac to whom this privilege had been accorded. Isaac, and not Ishmael, had built the Kaaba; and the former monarchs of Persia had made yearly pilgrimages to the Hejaz, long ere the Kuraish had become guardians of the Holy Places. This rivalry between the two races was the main cause of the incessant insurrections which shook to pieces the power of the Ommayas. Every pretender to power could make appeal to it with the certainty of a hearty response. The Persians recruited the ranks of the Separatists, impelled thereto by the levelling character of their creed, and the merciless war they waged against the khalifs and their officials. They flocked even more readily to the banners of the Alides, for here they were taught that the Arabs were a people peculiarly hateful in the eyes of God, on account of the barbarous murder of the son of the khalif Ali on the plain of Kerbela. But hatred of the Arab was the predominant motive which guided their actions, and any cause was good which held out a hope of retaliation on the victors of Kadesia. Consequently, when the House of Abbas began to intrigue against the Ommayas, they found their ablest and most zealous supporters in the ranks of the Persian landed aristocracy. And when the Abbasides emerged victorious from the conquest, the Persians deemed that not only had the day of their deliverance arrived, but of their supremacy also.

The Persian influence at the new court was, naturally, very powerful. Abou Moslem, the Khorasani, had placed the Abbasides on the throne, and his chief officers and counsellors were men of Persian extraction. But the Arabs were not prepared to acquiesce tamely in this supremacy. The Yemenite tribes had borne an equal share in the fighting which had terminated in the expulsion of the Ommayas; and the House of Abbas was not, as yet, in a position to dispense with their aid and loyalty. The hearts of the Syrian Arabs were still wedded to the princes of the fallen dynasty; the Alides, though stunned for the moment by the unlooked-for turn of fortune which had raised the Abbasides to power, were numerous and fanatical; and the newly-elected khalifs could not venture to alienate from themselves a single supporter. They were under a necessity to appear to favour both Arab and Persian equally; and this necessity made of the court a perfect hotbed of intrigue, plotting, and counterplotting.

Abou'l Abbas, the first of the Abbaside khalifs, died after a brief reign of four years and eight months (A.H. 136). He was succeeded by his brother, Abou Jaafar, surnamed *al Mansour*, or "the victorious." The new ruler was a man sordid and avaricious, incapable of friendship or of gratitude, suspicious, vindictive, and prodigal of blood. His dungeons were crowded with the victims of his fears and his cruelties. The most solemn engagements were shamelessly broken by him, the moment it suited his convenience, and his

long reign is a record of fierce revolts occasioned by his duplicity and his cruelty.*

On the accession of Abou Jaafar, the foremost man in his empire was Abou Moslem, the Khorasani. Him the new khalif feared and hated. He feared him on account of his influence over the people of Khorasan, and hated him with that bitterness, with which an Oriental sovereign almost invariably resents the burden of gratitude. His first act upon his accession would have been the arrest and execution of the too formid-

* It is worthy of record that there were men who dared to rebuke this tyrant even in the plenitude of his power. Ibn Khallikan writes as follows:—"It is related that the khalif al Mansour sent for Malek ibn Anas and Abdallah, the son of Tawûs. When they entered into his presence, he reflected for a short time, and then said to Abdallah, 'Relate to me some of the Traditions which you learned from your father.' On this, Abdallah spoke as follows: 'My father taught me this Tradition—"*He shall be punished the most severely of all men on the day of resurrection, to whom God has confided a portion of His authority, and who allows injustice to enter into his judgments.*"' Al Mansour remained silent for a considerable time, and Malek, in relating the fact, afterwards observed, 'I tucked up my clothes lest some of his blood might fall on them; but al Mansour then said, 'Hand me that inkhorn.' He repeated the order three times; but Abdallah did not obey. 'Why do you not give it me?' asked the khalif. 'Because I fear that you may use it in writing something contrary to God's law, and I should then be your accomplice.' 'Up, both of you, and leave me!' exclaimed al Mansour. 'That is just what we desire to do,' replied Abdallah. 'From that day,' said Malek, 'I have never ceased to acknowledge the eminent merit of the son of Tawûs.'"—*Ibn Khall. Biog. Dic.*, vol. i. p. 643.

Some of my readers may object to the introduction of these anecdotes, as not bearing directly on the subject-matter of my book. My reply is, that to me they seem to have an immediate reference to it. To my thinking they show, better and more truly than pages of dissertation would do the moral and political consequences of Islam.

able king-maker, but that an insurrection broke out. At the head of this movement was the khalif's brother, Abdallah; and the Syrian Arabs, from hatred of the reigning sovereign, flocked in crowds to his standard. Abou Jaafar perceived that he could not yet afford to dispense with the services of the ablest soldier in his dominions. Abou Moslem was despatched to put down the rebellion, which he effected after a brief but severe campaign, in which he exhibited great military skill. This signal service awakened no feeling of kindliness in the breast of Abou Jaafar. Believing that he was now secure upon the throne, he recommenced plotting the destruction of the man who had raised his family to greatness. He conferred upon him the government of Egypt, as a mark of recognition for the service he had just done. Abou Moslem understood the motive of this appointment perfectly well. He was aware of the khalif's animosity, and perceived that in sending him to Egypt, the khalif merely wished to cut him off from his friends and partisans in Khorasan. He declined, therefore, the proffered post, and set out from the head-quarters of his army to resume the government of Khorasan. The khalif was sorely troubled in spirit. He felt that he had revealed his designs against Abou Moslem without luring Abou Moslem into his power. Should the latter reach Khorasan, he would rally his dependants round him; and the same irresistible energy and skill which had placed the Abbasides in power would be put forth to sweep them away. A deputation was sent from Medain, where the khalif held his court, to induce

Abou Moslem to change his resolution. Abou Moslem was at this time encamped in Hulwan, with eight thousand men. The deputation brought with them not merely the friendly assurances of the khalif, but letters from all the leading members of the House of Abbas, entreating the great Khorasani leader not to do them the grievous wrong of supposing that the House of Abbas could be guilty of purporting treason against its faithfullest and ablest servant. If he would only come to Medain he would soon learn that his fears were groundless, and the destiny which awaited the man whom the king delighted to honour.

Abou Moslem knew that destiny too well. He was not deceived, even for a moment, by this accumulation of perjuries. But he felt that the coils were closing round him. The khalif had despatched a confidential messenger to Abou Moslem's lieutenant in Khorasan, conferring upon him the government of that province, on the condition that he opposed the entrance of Abou Moslem. And simultaneously with the deputation from Medain, arrived letters from this lieutenant, announcing his intention to oppose Abou Moslem's approach to Merou. Unknowing what to do, Abou Moslem sent a friend to the court of the khalif to attempt to ascertain the veritable disposition of the khalif towards him.

The khalif received the envoy with marked cordiality and favour. He protested against the unworthy suspicions of himself harboured by Abou Moslem; and vowed that he was animated by no other feelings than

those of affection and gratitude. Abou Ishak (such was the name of the envoy) was completely deceived. He returned to Hulwan, and assured his master that he might proceed to Medain in perfect assurance of the good faith of the khalif.

Abou Moslem was not reassured, and his friends warned him that he was proceeding to certain death. They urged him to go on to Khorasan. He had eight thousand trained men with him; others would soon flock to his standard, and place him in a position to defy the menaces of his treacherous lieutenant. But Abou Moslem, for the first time in his life, had become a prey to irresolution. There are in the old chronicles indications which seem to show that the sense of all the blood he had shed was weighing heavily upon his heart. He had commenced his career as a devout and sincere believer in the Imamate of the House of Abbas. He was one of those who had embraced this doctrine in its extremest form, regarding the Imam as an incarnation of the Divinity, and explaining away all the positive precepts of the Koran into allegorical injunctions of complete, unquestioning devotion to him. But whether through the ingratitude of the khalif, or some other cause unknown, he had, in these latter days, been brought to believe that the House of Ali, and not that of Abbas, were the real inheritors of the Imamate. The discovery that all the mourning and desolation and woe which he had brought upon the earth had been wrought for an impostor, *against* and not *for* the will of God, seems to have altogether unhinged him. A mist had fallen from his eyes, and

he saw his past life as one terrible and irretrievable mistake. Of what avail was it to attempt to protract it longer? In a sort of despair he resolved to proceed to the court of the khalif.

On hearing that Abou Moslem was on his way, the khalif quitted Medain, and came to a place called Roumiya to await him. He knew that Abou Moslem was at the head of eight thousand men of tried fidelity. To attempt to slay him in their presence would lead to a desperate and doubtful struggle. He must lay asleep the suspicions of both leader and followers, and slay the former at some propitious moment when alone and destitute of assistance. Accordingly, when Abou Moslem neared Roumiya, he was received as an honoured guest. The troops of the royal household were paraded to receive him, all the chief men of the court attended his arrival; and none were more liberal in smiles and honied speeches than Abou Ayoub, the vizier of the khalif. When he entered the presence of the sovereign he met with a most gracious reception, and, after a brief interview, was permitted to retire to his tent.

Abou Jaafar had no intention of striking till his victim was fairly within his power, and day after day the khalif and his general met and conversed together in an amicable manner. According to the chronicles, he lulled to sleep the suspicions of Abou Moslem. The latter consulted a book of predictions, and found therein his own history, that he was to destroy a dynasty, create a dynasty, and be slain in the land of *Roum*. This, he interpreted to mean that he would die in

battle against the Byzantine armies in Asia Minor. Meanwhile the khalif had made all his preparations for the murder he meditated. He had selected from his bodyguard an officer and four men, on whom he could rely. These were to be concealed behind the drapery of his tent, with orders that on a given signal they should rush forth and cut Abou Moslem to pieces.

On Thursday, 24th Shaban, A.H. 137 (February, A.D. 755) the Khorasani leader repaired as usual to the royal pavilion. He was informed that the khalif was making a general ablution, previously to prayers, and he sat down to await him in the ante-chamber. In the meantime al Mansour had sent for the party of murderers, and given them their final orders. He then took his seat upon the throne; and Abou Moslem was admitted and made his salutation, which the khalif returned. Al Mansour then permitted him to sit down, but after a few observations, commenced to vehemently reproach him. "Why," asked Abou Moslem, "why speak you so to me, after all my efforts and services?" "Son of a prostitute!" exclaimed al Mansour. "Thou owest thy success to our own good fortune. Had a negress slave been in thy place, she would have done as much as thee! Was it not thou who, in writing to me, didst place thy name before mine? Was it not thou who wrotest to obtain in marriage my aunt Aâsiya, pretending, indeed, that thou wast a descendant from Salih, the son of Abdallah ibn Abbas? Thou hast undertaken, infamous wretch, to mount where thou canst not reach!" On this Abou Moslem

seized the khalif by the hand, which he kissed and pressed, offering excuses for his conduct; but al Mansour flung him off, saying, "May God not spare me, if I spare thee!" He then clapped his hands, on which the assassins rushed out upon Abou Moslem, and struck him with their swords, the khalif exclaiming all the time, "God cut your hands off, rascals! strike!" On receiving the first blow, Abou Moslem said, "Commander of the Faithful! spare me, that I may be useful against thy enemies." "May God not spare me if I do!" was the pitiless reply; "where have I a greater enemy than thou!"

When Abou Moslem was slain, his body was rolled up in a carpet, and, soon after, Jaafar ibn Hanzala entered. "What think you of Abou Moslem?" said the khalif to him. "Commander of the Faithful," answered the other, "if you have ever the misfortune to pull a single hair out of his head, there is no resource for you but to kill him, and to kill him, and to kill him again." "God has given thee understanding," replied al Mansour, "here he is in the carpet." On seeing him dead, Jaafar said, "Commander of the Faithful! count this as the first day of your reign."

The murder of Abou Moslem was immediately followed by a fierce insurrection in Khorasan to avenge his death. This was suppressed; but it seems to have convinced the khalif that he must be careful not to alienate his Persian subjects from him. At any rate, neither the murder of Abou Moslem, nor the subsequent revolt, appears to have diminished the Persian influence at court.

Though al Mansour affected a rigid orthodoxy, the men who stood nearest to his person openly scoffed at the dogmas of Islam. Among these were Yaktin, the keeper of the great seal, and the man whom the khalif honoured above all men; his son Ali, who, besides being commander-in-chief of the army, was head of the Intelligence Department, and received all the reports sent up to the khalif from his secretaries in the provinces; together with other high officials, and members of the family of Abbas, closely related to the khalif himself. The leading intellectual spirits of this party were, Abdallah ibn al Mukaffa, who was regarded as the greatest genius of the age, and Salih ibn Abd al Kaddus. Their fundamental doctrine was the obligation of universal scepticism. Abou'l Hudail, a leading divine among the Rationalists, recounts how he met Salih ibn Abd al Kaddus in great grief for the loss of his son. "I know not," said Abou'l Hudail, "why you should grieve for him, since, according to you, man is like grass growing in the field." To this, Salih made reply, "I grieve for his loss for the sole reason that he had not yet read my 'Book of Doubts.'" "And what book is that, Salih?" "It is a work composed by me, and whoever reads it is led to doubt of everything that exists, so as to imagine that it exists not; and to doubt of everything that does not exist, so as to imagine that it exists." But, as is habitual with sceptics, these doubters in Islam were very positive in the affirmation of negatives. They denied the existence of a Deity, and, consequently, the possibility of a Prophetic mission. They

rejected the doctrine of man's immortality. According to them, the life in man was identical with the life in grass, and the flowers of the field—quickened by the warmth of the sun, and perishing never to reappear, except as merged in the general life of things. At the same time, they agreed in condemning those practices which the wise, in all ages had pronounced to be hurtful to society—such as lying, tyranny, and cruelty; and they held that men were under a moral obligation to be agreeable and courteous to their fellow men.

According to the orthodox writers, these "Nihilists," seeing the enormous power which the Koran exercised over the hearts and reason of the Faithful, despaired of the spread of their doctrines, unless they could produce a book which should surpass the Koran in genius and sublimity. This, therefore, they determined to attempt; and selected Ibn al Mukaffa as the man among them best fitted, by reason of his learning, his eloquence, and his imagination, to achieve the task successfully. Ibn al Mukaffa agreed, on the condition that twelve months should be allowed him in which to accomplish his task, and that during that period all his bodily wants should be provided for, so as to allow his mind to concentrate itself, without one distracting thought or trouble, on the work set before it. These stipulations were accepted, and Ibn al Mukaffa set to work. At the expiration of six months, his friends came to inquire what progress he had made. They found him sitting, pen in hand, deeply absorbed in study, and a sheet of paper lying before him; all

around was a wild confusion of closely-written manuscript, torn to pieces and scattered over the apartment. They anxiously inquired what progress he had made. To their dismay they learned he had made none. He had taken a single verse from the Koran, and tried to write one equalling it in excellence. He had made repeated attempts during the whole of the six months he had passed in seclusion. The immense quantity of torn manuscript which covered the room, and threatened to bury the rash "Nihilist," was at once an evidence of his zeal and the crushing record of his failure; he was obliged to confess, with shame and confusion of face, that this single line was on a level of excellence he was altogether unable to reach. If for six months a single line had thus baffled him, it was clearly impossible for him, or any other man, to produce a whole work comparable to the Sacred Volume.

This failure notwithstanding, Ibn al Mukaffa was an active proselytiser to the day of his death; and it was declared that there was not a single book tainted with this heresy which was not written by him, or inspired by his influence. In the terrible death which at last met him, the Orthodox, without doubt, perceived the hand of an offended God. A resident in Basra, he used to make free with Sofyan ibn Muawia al Mouhallebi, the governor of that city. He very frequently addressed him by the name of *Ibn al Mughtalima* (*son of the lascivious female*), an appellation injurious to the honour of Sofyan's mother. And as Sofyan was remarkable for the possession of a large

and ponderous nose, Ibn al Mukaffa, on visiting him, would say, "How are you both?"—meaning the governor and his nose. Sofyan frequently threatened to cut him limb from limb while his eyes looked on.

About this time Sulaiman and Isa, the uncles of the khalif, arrived at Basra, to have a pardon drawn up for their brother Abdallah, who had revolted. Al Mansour consented to forgive what had passed; but as the craft and treachery of the khalif were well known, the two brothers had recourse to Ibn al Mukaffa to draw up a letter of pardon, to which the khalif was to affix his signature, and which should be so written as to leave al Mansour no pretext for making an attempt upon Abdallah's life. Ibn al Mukaffa obeyed their directions, and drew up the letter in the most binding terms, inserting the following clause among others:—"*And if at any time the Commander of the Faithful act perfidiously towards his uncle, Abdallah ibn Ali, his wives shall be divorced from him, his horses shall be confiscated for the service of God, his slaves shall become free, and the Moslems released from their allegiance towards him.*" The other conditions of the deed were expressed in a manner equally strict. Al Mansour, having read the paper, was highly displeased, and asked who wrote it, and on being informed that it was Abdallah ibn al Mukaffa, sent a letter to Sofyan, the governor of Basra, ordering him to put Ibn al Mukaffa to death. Ibn al Mukaffa, on appearing before Sofyan, made an appeal for mercy. "May my mother," was the reply, "be really lascivious, if I do not kill thee in a manner such as none were ever killed before." On

this he ordered an oven to be heated, and the limbs of Ibn al Mukaffa to be cut off joint by joint. These he cast into the oven before his eyes, and he then threw him in bodily, and closed the oven on him, saying, "It is not a crime in me to punish you thus, for you are an infidel, who corrupt the people." (A.H. 142, A.D. 759, 60.)

The labours of Ibn al Mukaffa and his companions bore abundant fruit. The religion of Doubt spread widely among the educated and wealthy classes, and these gave liberally of their riches to supply teachers for the dissemination of their doctrines among the common people. Still, it was not until the khalif al Mansour was dead that they ventured upon an open assault upon the tenets of Islam.

Al Mansour died A.H. 158, and was succeeded by his son Muhammad, surnamed *Mehdi*. The accession of the new prince was like the sudden appearance of summer in a frozen land. Baghdad had been built by the late khalif, but under his harsh and gloomy reign the Muhammadan capital had been but a fortress and a dungeon. A brighter day now dawned upon it, and the citizens rejoiced in the unwonted sunshine. The new sovereign was young, handsome, profuse, and fond of pleasure. "He resembles," said a panegyrist of the day, "the brilliant moon in beauty; the spring-time, from his perfumes and his suavity; the lion by his courage; and the sea, with its resounding waves, is the emblem of his munificence and generosity." With him to lead the revels, the city of Baghdad speedily shook off "the winter garment of repentance."

The State prisons were thrown open, and thousands of hapless and hopeless captives restored to light and liberty. The treasure-chests of the deceased sovereign were broken, and their contents scattered abroad with a lavish hand. "If you seek for the Vicar of God," says a splenetic poet, "you will find him with a wine-flask on one side and a lute on the other." "What does living avail?" asks another, of a temperament more congenial to the habits of the new sovereign—

> "What does living avail,
> If we spend not our evenings with those we prize,
> And at morning fail,
> By the wine-cup subdued and by fair large eyes?"

Among the prisoners in the dungeons of al Mansour was a certain Yakoub ibn Daoud. He had been involved in one of the Alide revolts of the preceding reign, and was one among those liberated by the new sovereign. A Persian by birth, accomplished, learned in all the learning of his time, and like the men of his race generally, a singularly genial and pleasant companion, he first attracted the attention of the khalif, and ended by establishing a complete ascendancy over him. The entire administration of the empire was entrusted to Yakoub, and no provincial governor was allowed to address the sovereign except through the medium of the minister. It is allowed that he made a good use of his power, carrying out works of public utility, such as the building of bridges and karavanserais, the excavation of wells, and the establishment of homes or refuges for

the sick and the infirm. But to the Faithful in Islam his rule was a scandal and an abomination. The Nihilists waxed bold, and flaunted about without fear or shame in the very precincts of the royal palace. The highest officials of the State openly scoffed at the religion of the Prophet, and made merry over the unmeaning ceremonies of the Pilgrimage, for so they blasphemously termed them. These scoffers, if they saw a number of the Faithful drawn up in line to repeat prayers, derided them as "a string of camels;" when they prostrated themselves, they inquired if it was a decorous custom thus to exhibit their hinder parts to God. Even the sacred soil of Mekka was profaned by the sound of these audacious impieties. When the crowds were making the seven revolutions round the house of God, "What do you hope," it was sarcastically asked, "to find in that house?" When the pilgrims were running between the two sacred hills, Safa and Merwan, it was the same. "Have these men committed theft," was the mocking inquiry, "that they run so?"

The orthodox doctors beheld with dismay the rise and spread of this infidelity. The Arab aristocracy regarded it with bitter dislike, as a proof of Persian ascendancy and their own waning influence. But so long as Yakoub ibn Daoud was at the right hand of the khalif, both doctors and chiefs were reduced to impotency. They had recourse to satire. As the khalif was proceeding to Mekka upon pilgrimage, he passed a milestone, which bore a freshly-written inscription. He stopped to examine it, and read as

follows:—"*O Mehdi! you would be truly excellent had you not taken for a favourite Yakoub, the son of Daoud.*" The remonstrance had no effect; under it the khalif caused to be inscribed, "*It shall be so, in spite of the fellow's nose who wrote that, bad luck attend him.*"

Yakoub was made intendant of the palace. No one was admitted to converse on public matters directly with the khalif. The officers of State, to their profound indignation, were detained at the gates of the palace, while the favourite went to and fro, between them and the khalif.

An accident eclipsed the rising hopes of the Persians, and put an end to the ascendancy of the Persian favourite. One evening, as Yakoub was mounting his horse, to return from the palace to his own house, the animal threw his rider with such violence that both his legs were broken. The vizier fainted. The khalif, hearing what had happened, to the unspeakable scandal of the Court, ran out barefooted, and remained seated by his favourite until his senses were restored. He then had him placed in a litter and conveyed to his own house. This unlucky accident occasioned the ruin of Yakoub. For many weeks he was confined to his bed; and in his absence the Arab chiefs obtained that access to the ear of the khalif which, hitherto, they had sought for in vain. It is never difficult to arouse the fears of an Oriental potentate. The history of every Muhammadan Court, since the first birth of Islam, is a history of constant intrigue, rebellion, and revolution. The throne of the

Abbaside khalif rested upon a mine charged with explosive matter. Not a year passed but, in one province or another of his extensive dominions, there were partial eruptions; and at any moment, beneath the throne itself a gulf might be opened in which, it and its occupant would be swallowed up for ever. Now that Yakoub was no longer there to plead for himself with his protestations of fidelity, and his gay and lively conversation, the Arab party had little difficulty in awakening the ever-restless fears of the khalif. This Yakoub, they pointed out, was the son of Daoud, who had been the secretary of Nasr ibn Seyaur, one of the staunchest adherents of the fallen House of Ommaya. The man himself, in the reign of Mehdi's father, had been imprisoned on account of his participation in the insurrections of the Shias. Was it likely that a man thus connected could be a true servant of the House of Abbas? It was notorious, they added, that the Shias entertained dangerous and extravagant expectations, occasioned by the favour and authority he enjoyed. It behoved the khalif, both on account of himself, and as the head of Islam, to make severe investigation into the mind of one who had shown himself to be both a heretic and a rebel. Mehdi's confidence in his minister was shaken; and he determined to put his fidelity to the test.

He caused a descendant of the unfortunate Ali to be arrested, and confined in an apartment of the palace. Yakoub, meanwhile, had recovered, and was in attendance upon the khalif as heretofore. One day Mehdi received him in a magnificent saloon. The floor

was covered with rich carpets; crystal vases and vessels of gold and silver were scattered about it in profusion; at the further end, it opened out upon a rose garden in the fulness of bloom. Within this enchanted chamber sat the khalif, and beside him a slave girl, beautifully attired, and

"Lovelier than a young gazelle,
Which passes like a gleam of light across a shady dell."*

"Tell me, Yakoub," said the khalif, "what think you of this saloon of ours?" "It is the very perfection of beauty; may God permit the Commander of the Faithful to enjoy it long." "Well," rejoined the khalif, "all that it contains, with this girl to crown your happiness, is yours, provided you will do what I shall ask." Then he caused Yakoub to swear by Allah, thrice, that he would do what he was about to ask of him. Finally, "There is an Alide," said the khalif, mentioning his name; "I wish you to deliver me from the uneasiness which he causes me. Here he is; I give him up to you." And so saying, the khalif left the apartment, leaving the girl, Yakoub, and the Alide together. Yakoub was delighted at his good fortune; but when the time came for putting the Alide to death, his heart failed him. Touched by recollections of his past life, he took compassion on the young man, supplied him with money, and let him go free. But the slave girl was, in truth, a spy set over him; and she, at once, sent a messenger to the khalif to acquaint him with what Yakoub had done. Mehdi caused all the

* Hafiz.

roads to be patrolled, and the Alide was captured and brought back to the palace. The khalif then summoned Yakoub to his presence. "What has become of the man I delivered over to you?" "I have delivered you from the uneasiness he caused you." "Is he dead?" "He is." "Swear by Allah." "I swear by Allah." "Boy," said the khalif to an attendant, "bring out to us those who are in the next room." They were brought, and among them was the Alide, with Yakoub's money still in his possession. Yakoub gazed at him mute and panic-stricken. "Your life," said the khalif, "is justly forfeited, and it depends upon me to shed your blood; but I will not. Shut him up in the *Matbak*."

The *Matbak* was a deep well-like dungeon, communicating with the upper earth by means of a narrow aperture. Over this aperture there was a lid which, when shut down, consigned the prisoner to perpetual darkness. In this abode the fallen vizier lingered out fifteen years. People were forbidden to speak of him, or make inquiries concerning him. But a dungeon in those days was a safer dwelling-place than the world of men and women. The khalif Mehdi died and was gathered to his fathers. His successor, Hadi, ruled and died also; and the khalif Haroun al Rashid had reigned for six years before the prisoner of the *Matbak* was released from his living tomb. Yahya the Barmekide, who was then in the height of his power and influence, became acquainted with the place of his captivity. For in those days the sudden disappearance of a vizier, though it might have stimulated curiosity,

rarely prompted to inquiry; and Yakoub appears to have vanished from the Court where he held the foremost place, with few, if any, knowing what had become of him. Yahya now solicited his release from the khalif; and Haroun, touched by the remembrance of Yakoub's kindness to him when a child, granted the petition. The captive has recorded his experience during captivity, and in the hour of release :—

"Every day," he says, "during the fifteen years of my remaining there, a small loaf of bread and a pitcher of water were let down to me by a cord, and the hours of prayer were announced so that I might hear the call. Towards the end of the thirteenth year I saw in a dream a figure, which came to me and said—

"'The Lord took pity on Joseph, and drew him forth from the bottom of a well, and of a chamber where darkness was around him.'

"I gave thanks to God and said, 'Deliverance is coming.' I then remained another year without seeing anything, till the same figure visited me again, and addressed me thus—

"'God may perhaps bring deliverance; every day He does something for His creatures.'

"I remained another year without seeing anything; but at the expiration of that time the same figure came to me and said—

"'The affliction in which you were yesterday may perhaps be followed by a prompt deliverance from care. He that is in fear may cease to dread; the captive may be delivered, and the stranger in a distant land may be taken back to his family.'

"When morning came I heard a voice calling on me, but thought it was the call to prayers. A black rope was lowered down, and I was told to tie it about my waist. I did so, and was drawn up. When I faced the daylight my sight was extinguished. They led me to al Rashid, and bade me salute the khalif. I said, 'Salutation to the Commander of the Faithful, the *well-directed* (al Mehdi), on whom be the mercy of God and His benediction.' The Prince answered, 'I am not he.' On this I said, 'Salutation to the Commander of the Faithful, the *director* (al Hadi), on whom be the mercy of God and His benediction.' He replied again, 'I am not he.' On this I said, 'Salutation to the Commander of the Faithful,

the *rightly-guided* (al Rashid), on whom be the mercy of God and His benediction.' To this al Rashid replied, 'Yakoub ibn Daoud! no one interceded with me in your favour; but this night, as I was carrying one of my children on my shoulder, I remembered that you formerly used to carry me about in the same manner; so I had compassion on you, thinking of the high position which you once held, and I ordered you to be taken out of confinement.'"

The khalif's favours did not end here. He treated the released captive with the greatest kindness, restored to him all his property, and allowed him the choice of a place of residence. Yakoub selected Mekka, and there he remained till the day of his death, which took place in the year 187 (A.D. 803).

The orthodox party were not satisfied with the fall of the favourite vizier. The heresy of Nihilism had still to be suppressed. It had spread to such an extent among all classes of the people, that the khalif himself was thoroughly alarmed. His anger, too, at the faithlessness of his minister naturally embittered him against those whom that minister favoured and protected. He gave, therefore, a willing ear to the clamours and complaints of the orthodox party, and established an inquisitorial tribunal for the discovery and punishment of heresy. This tribunal produced the usual results. A few genuine heretics were punished; and large numbers of innocent persons fell victims of false witnesses who had some personal enmity against them. It continued its operations through the remaining years of the reign of Mehdi, and the brief period of sovereignty enjoyed by his successor. The public profession of unbelief was

checked, and the Persian influence was, for the time, greatly depressed. The Arab party, with Fadhl ibn ar Rabi at their head, basked in the sunshine of the royal favour. But with the advent to power of Haroun al Rashid another revolution took place, and the Persians again resumed the ascendancy.

# CHAPTER II.

## THE BARMEKIDES.

A.D. 712—809.

THE stories in the "Arabian Nights" have made all the world familiar with the names of the khalif Haroun al Rashid, and his ministers, the Barmekides. Among the most zealous and able of the Persian missionaries who had worked with Abou Moslem for the overthrow of the Ommayas was Khaled ibn Barmek. His father was the *Barmek* or custodian of the celebrated Temple of Perpetual Spring, the most venerated shrine of the Zoroastrian faith, and accounted as one of the wonders of the world. According to Arab accounts, we read that in A.H. 93 or A.H. 94, the wife of this Barmek was captured by the Arabs in an expedition made by Kutaiba ibn Muslim into Balkh, the province in which the temple was situated. In the partition of booty, she became the concubine of Kutaiba's brother, Abdallah. Some months later, a treaty of peace was agreed upon between Kutaiba and the people of Balkh, and all prisoners taken by the Moslems were allowed to return to their homes. The Barmek's wife returned to her husband, and was shortly after delivered of a son, Khaled.

This story was evidently devised to relieve the Barmekides from the odium of a purely Persian origin; or, more probably still, it was an invention of later historians to account for the extraordinary power they enjoyed under a sovereign reputed so orthodox as the khalif Haroun al Rashid. Certain it is that Khaled was a Persian to his heart's core, and a bitter enemy of the Arabs. Concerning him, Masoudi, the historian, writes as follows :—

"The height to which Khaled ibn Barmek attained in prudence, bravery, learning, generosity, and other noble qualities was never realized by any of his sons: Yahya did not equal him in judgment and intelligence; nor Fadhl, the son of Yahya, in liberality and disinterestedness; nor Jaafar, the son of Yahya, in bravery and energy. When Abou Moslem the Khorasani, sent Kahtaba to Tai against Yezid ibn Omar, who was governing the two Iraks, Khaled was one of those who accompanied him. They halted on the way at a village, and whilst they were breakfasting on the terrace of one of the houses, they saw several flocks of gazelles and other wild animals coming from the desert, and approaching so near that they got into the camp among the soldiers. 'Emir!' said Khaled, 'order the men to saddle and bridle!' Kahtaba stood up in amazement, and seeing nothing to alarm him, said, 'What do you mean, Khaled, by this advice?' The other replied, 'The enemy are in march against you; do you not see that if these flocks of wild animals draw so near to us, they must be flying before a numerous body of men?' The troops were scarcely on horseback when the dust raised by the approaching army was perfectly visible. Had it not been for Khaled, they would have all perished."

Khaled was not less skilful in the tortuous intrigues of the Oriental Court than in conducting the operations on a field of battle. He became the vizier of as Saffah, the first of the Abbaside khalifs, and was continued in that office by the successor of as Saffah, al Mansour. When this

khalif resolved upon abandoning Damascus, and erecting a new capital—Baghdad—upon the banks of the Tigris, Khaled was entrusted with the conduct of the work. The chief cities of the empire were compelled to give up their most splendid ornaments to heighten the beauty of the new city. Wasit was called upon to surrender five of her iron gates; Koufa and Damascus, each of them, three. The magnificent palace of the Sassanian monarch still rose in unruined majesty from amid the deserted streets and uncultivated gardens of Madain. The splendid pile was beloved by the vanquished Persians as a fitting memento of their departed magnificence. Khaled received orders to level it with the ground, and convey the materials to Baghdad. Khaled strove hard to get this order rescinded. To have revealed his real motives would have been to incur death as a traitor and a heretic. He besought the khalif, therefore, to allow the palace to remain uninjured as a splendid monument of Arabian prowess and glory. The khalif persevered in his purpose notwithstanding, but was ultimately compelled to relinquish it by reason of the cost of destruction and transport. The defaced and mutilated structure was a sadder sight to Khaled than would have been its total disappearance. And he urged upon the khalif the need of prosecuting the undertaking to the end, lest it should be turned into a taunt against Islam, that what the Fire Worshippers had erected, the Faithful were unable to destroy.

But the means whereby Khaled attracted towards

himself the lasting good-will of the khalif, exhibit his character in a very different light.

As Saffah, when proclaiming his brother, Abou Jaafar, as his successor, had designated Isa ibn Mousa as inheritor to the throne after Abou Jaafar. And the people had taken the oath of allegiance to Isa as well as Abou Jaafar. This arrangement of the succession was profoundly displeasing to al Mansour. He desired to transmit the khalifate to his son Mehdi, and year after year he had tried one device after another to rid himself of Isa. He nominated him to the command of all armies in the field, in the hope of getting him killed. But Isa bore a charmed life; and being, moreover, the bravest and ablest of the Abbasides, he returned victorious from every battle-field, and again and again redeemed the empire from ruin. The khalif then attempted to extract from him a resignation of his rights; but these Isa refused to yield. Driven almost to his wits' end, al Mansour resolved to remove the obstacle after his wonted fashion, and have the obstinate Isa murdered. The problem was how to accomplish this without arousing the indignation and wrath of the family of Abbas. The plan he hit upon is a good illustration of the unscrupulous methods of Oriental despots.

The khalif's uncle, Abdallah ibn Ali, who had rebelled on the death of as Saffah, and been defeated by Abou Moslem, was in prison at Baghdad. The khalif had lured him into his power by promises of pardon, which then, as his custom was, he had subsequently ignored. At the close of the year 147,

Mansour gave out that he was about to proceed upon pilgrimage to Mekka. He entrusted the care of Baghdad to Isa ibn Mousa; and gave him secret orders to put to death Abdallah ibn Ali on the very day the khalif left the capital. In order to ensure the execution of this order, he was careful to explain to Isa that by the execution of Abdallah he would benefit himself; for whether he (the khalif) or Isa ibn Mousa ruled over the Muhammadan world, neither could feel secure in his seat so long as Abdallah existed. The khalif hoped to have thus killed two birds with one stone. He would be rid of Abdallah ibn Ali, whom he feared and detested; but that being accomplished, he intended to disavow the orders he had given. Isa ibn Mousa would then appear to the House of Abbas as a man who had committed an unauthorized murder, requiring the prompt application of the law of retaliation. This, however deeply he might appear to regret it, the khalif would be compelled to concede as just; and thus he would be disencumbered of two formidable rivals at one and the same time.

But high station in an Oriental Court gives an extraordinary acuteness to the minds of those who enjoy it. Their lives depend upon a right understanding of the sovereign in whose service they are. To study and know that is the chief business of their lives And Isa ibn Mousa knew perfectly well that the khalif never acted, in reference to him, without some design on his life. Consequently he did not put Abdallah to death; he only pretended that he had done so.

The khalif, who had announced his intention of proceeding on pilgrimage for no other reason than to obtain a good pretext for leaving Baghdad and disarming the suspicions of Isa, had no sooner reached Koufa, than he despatched a mission to Isa, to inquire if the execution had been carried out. The response was in the affirmative. Mansour then gave out that reasons of State compelled him to defer the pilgrimage to another year, and returned suddenly to Baghdad.

A few days after the khalif suggested to his son Mehdi to assemble the Bani Abbas in his (al Mansour's) palace, and solicit from his clemency the liberation of Abdallah ibn Ali. The khalif received the request graciously. He summoned Isa ibn Mousa, and ordered him to set Abdallah at freedom. Isa replied, that in obedience to the orders of the khalif he had caused Abdallah to be put to death. The khalif assumed an appearance of surprised indignation. He swore by Allah that he had never given such an order. He protested that if Isa had committed this crime, he had done it on his own responsibility, moved thereto, as he supposed, by the promptings of private hate. The Bani Abbas drew their swords in high wrath, and demanded the blood of the murderer. The khalif, with much show of righteous indignation, assented. Isa entreated them to have mercy on his grey hairs. He spoke to deaf ears; already were a dozen swords poised in air, when he requested a moment's respite to interrogate the khalif once more. Did the khalif, he inquired, still mean to assert that he had never given the order for Abdallah's death? "No," replied the

khalif, "I never gave such an order, and I am resolved to revenge him. That man," he added, turning to the Bani Abbas, and pointing to Isa, "must be killed." Isa broke into a laugh. "Your stratagem," he said, "was well conceived, but it has failed; Abdallah is alive." And he produced him before them.

Baffled, but still persistent, the amiable khalif had recourse to poison, but only succeeded so far as to make Isa ibn Mousa extremely unwell. Driven to despair, he consulted Khaled ibn Barmek. Khaled undertook to obtain from Isa the resignation of his right. He took with him three functionaries of the State, known to all Baghdad as men of worth and integrity; and, thus accompanied, solicited an interview with Isa. But Isa, despite the promises and the threats of Khaled, obstinately persisted in his resolution to retain his right of succession, and the deputation at last retired unsuccessful. They looked blankly into one another's faces. The men of integrity were terrified almost to death. The khalif was a wrathful man, who thought no more of decapitating a man or a dozen men, than of eating his dinner. It was extremely probable that he would visit upon the deputation the wrath he would certainly feel against Isa. There was only one way of escape, so Khaled suggested, and that was to swear steadily that Isa had consented to forego his claims in favour of the son of the khalif. The testimony of Khaled, supported by the oaths of three men of such known integrity, would be more than sufficient to bear down the unsupported assertions of Isa. The three men of integrity clutched greedily

at this hope of escape. They declared with one voice that they were ready to swear to anything that the khalif or Khaled required of them. This being settled, they all repaired to the presence of the khalif, and reported that the interview had been successful. But when the three honest men had retired, Khaled revealed to the khalif the true state of the case. Al Mansour was in nowise disconcerted, provided the mendacity of the three honest men was to be thoroughly relied on. "Will they," he asked, "swear to what they have said in the presence of Isa?" "If they do not," replied Khaled, "have them beheaded." He then went to the three witnesses, and made known to them that if in this matter of swearing they flinched, or exhibited the smallest symptom of hesitation, they would be put to death. The khalif then convoked a numerous and splendid assembly; the Bani Abbas, the chief officers of the army, the leading citizens of Baghdad, the great doctors—all were present; and before this multitude the khalif addressed his thanks to Isa for the generous act he had done at the solicitation of his sovereign. Isa protested that he had done nothing, that he had, as on other occasions, rejected the overtures of Khaled and his friends. But at this moment the deputation came forward, and undertook to swear solemnly before God, that Isa had, in their presence, resigned his rights to the khalifate in favour of Mehdi, the son of Mansour. A great murmur of wrath rose up from the assembly; the remonstrances of the unhappy Isa were drowned in a storm of reproaches, which were hurled at him from

every side. Who was he, that he should attempt to stigmatise the veracity of men of such known integrity as these who bore witness against him? It was a frightful thing, unworthy of a Believer and a descendant of the Prophet, to doubt the oath of a Moslem when sworn on the Koran; with much more to the same effect. "It is," adds the author of the *Tareek-i-Tabari*, "this incident which acquired for Khaled the high position he held in the favour of al Mansour and his son the Mehdi."

Notwithstanding this signal service, Khaled was not secure from the caprices of the master he served. The khalif one day made a demand on him for a sum of three millions of dirhems, to be paid out of his private purse; adding that if the money was not in the treasury within three days, he should lose his head. In three days Khaled had collected only 2,700,000 dirhems, and he would assuredly have been beheaded, had not at this moment a formidable rebellion broken out in the district of Mosule. His ability as a military chief compelled the khalif to despatch him to the scene of the revolt. And he had barely quelled the insurrection, when an inroad of the wild mountaineers of Koordistan on the fertile plains of Irak, created a fresh demand for his services. The Koords were beaten, and driven back into their fastnesses; and in return for this double victory, the khalif did not return the money of which he had already plundered his subject, but graciously consented to forego the residue which yet remained to be paid.

From this time until the death of al Mansour

(A.H. 158), Khaled administered the government of Mosule, and his son Yahya governed the frontier province of Azerbaizan. Yahya was, like his father, a bold and skilful commander; the future khalif, Haroun al Rashid, was his pupil in the art of war; and during the reign of al Mehdi, Yahya won great renown by the sacred war he prosecuted, year after year, in the territories of the Byzantine Emperor. In these expeditions he was generally accompanied by Haroun; and then was laid the foundation of that friendship which has ever since associated together the names of the khalif Haroun al Rashid and the family of the Barmekides.

The khalif al Mehdi died A.H. 169, and during the brief reign of his son and successor, Hadi, the life of Haroun was in great danger. Mehdi had bequeathed the throne to Hadi, and on his death to his other son Haroun; but after the manner of his predecessors, Hadi, as soon as he became sovereign, wished to set Haroun aside in favour of his own son, a child of five or six years of age. Yahya, whose ability and public services had made him the foremost man at the Court of the khalif, spoke freely and fearlessly in defence of the rights of his pupil in the art of war. The khalif was greatly irritated. He had him arrested and flung into prison, and threatened to put him to death as one who had relapsed from the true faith into the abominations of infidelity. Yahya remained firm. He urged upon the khalif the impolicy of bequeathing a kingdom filled with all the elements of revolt and disorder to a child incapable of distinguishing his right hand from his left.

But Hadi, fretted and chafed by his remonstrances, and spurred on by the enemies of Haroun, continued to treat his brother with such severity that he fled the Court. The wrath of the khalif then turned against Haroun's mother, Kheizura, whom he suspected of encouraging and strengthening the contumacy of her son. He formed the design of ridding himself of her by poison; but Kheizura, having learned the designs of the khalif, bribed his female slaves to smother him while he slept. (16th Rabia-l'Awal, A.H. 170; 15th September, A.D. 786.)

When Haroun became khalif, his first act was to make Yahya his vizier. "My dear father," he said to him—for it was always by this appellation that he designated Yahya—"it is through the blessings and good fortune which attend you, and through your excellent management, that I am now seated on this throne; so I confide to you the direction of affairs." He then handed to him his signet ring. Yahya had four sons. Fadhl, the eldest, was distinguished both as a soldier and a statesman, and not less so for his lavish munificence. The khalif entrusted to him the government of Khorasan; and this province he governed with such amazing success, that on his return to Irak in the year 179 he was received with the highest honours by al Rashid, and the poets and preachers were commanded to extol him publicly. Mousa and Muhammad, the younger sons of Yahya, were also raised to posts of high honour; but among all the Barmekides, he who stood nearest to the heart of the khalif was Jaafar, the second brother. Haroun

loved him with the vehemence of a man incapable of moderation or self-restraint. He caused a robe to be made with two separate collars, so that he and Jaafar might wear it at the same time. And impatient of every moment which divided him from his favourite, he admitted him to the musical entertainments held within the secret precincts of the harem, which were graced by the presence of his wives and female slaves.

The post near the khalif occupied by Jaafar was Secretary of the Bureau of Correspondence. Under the Abbaside khalifs, this was a position of the highest importance. The royal orders to all the officials throughout the empire were drawn up and signed by the secretary, uncontrolled by any other public functionary. When the khalif took his place in open durbar, to hear petitions and redress grievances, the secretary had to be in attendance. It was his duty to read and explain to the khalif each successive petition, and to return it to the petitioner inscribed with the orders of the khalif. To worthily fulfil the functions of this post was exceedingly hard. These petitions referred, in many cases, to matters requiring for their decision an intimate acquaintance with the bewildering technicalities of Muhammadan law; and it was also considered requisite that these decisions should be drawn up in Arabic, and expressed with elegance, terseness, and grammatical accuracy. Jaafar had studied jurisprudence under the celebrated Kadi Abou Yusuf, the Hanifite; and it is said that in one night, he wrote upwards of one thousand decisions on as many

memorials which had been presented to the khalif, and that not one of these decisions deviated in the least from what was warranted by law. These judgments were not less remarkable for the elegance and command of language they exhibited, than for their legal accuracy; and in subsequent times they were greatly sought after by the lovers of good Arabic, on account of their singular felicity of expression. A brief decision, consisting of no more than a few words, would not sell for less than a piece of gold.

The greatness of the Barmekides endured for seventeen years (A.H. 170—187). That space of time constituted the "golden prime of the good Haroun al Rashid." Baghdad then attained its highest point of splendour. "The earth," to borrow the language of a poet of the day, "was irrigated with water of musk and rose; and the scent of delicious perfumes was scattered abroad. Evening after evening joyous companies assembled around a host generous and munificent. At a signal from him, the fair young musicians made their melodious voices to be heard, blended with the soft sighings of the flute." The Prophet's prohibition of wine was utterly disregarded. "Throughout that day," says our poet, "our hands shed the blood of the wine-cup; but the wine revenged itself upon our legs; a rosy liquor received from the hands of a gazelle-like nymph, who seemed to have extracted it from her cheeks, and then passed it round." Haroun al Rashid was a hard and pitiless sovereign, prone to treachery, and careless of the well-being of his subjects. The provinces were desolated by his exactions;

the dominions of the Byzantine emperors were perpetually invaded, not for conquest, but in order to fill the bazaars of Baghdad with crowds of Grecian slaves. The booty and the wealth thus acquired were, however, lavishly expended upon poets and divines; and they, in return, sung the praises of their master, and exalted his virtues. The khalif was cruel, treacherous, sensual, but exceedingly devout. His slave-catching expeditions were denominated "holy wars;" and he was assiduous in the performance of the pilgrimage. He made the journey in great state, surrounded by doctors and learned men, and showering gifts all along the route he passed over. Not less pious, and still more zealous in good works, was his chief wife and cousin, Zobeide. She had in her palace one hundred slave girls, who all knew the Koran by heart; each of these had the task of repeating one-tenth of it daily; so that her palace resounded with a continual humming like that of bees, conferring immense joy and satisfaction upon the hearts of all true Believers. Others of her works were of more practical utility. She furnished the city of Mekka with water, the scarcity of which had been so great that the contents of a single water-skin cost a gold piece. This water was brought to the sacred city from a distance of ten miles, levelling hills and hewing through rocks, by which means a stream was made to flow into Mekka. Along the roads, too, which were traversed by pilgrims on their way to the Hejaz, she caused wells to be sunk, and karavanserais to be erected for their accommodation.

Together with these beneficent works, the chroniclers record others which they seem to think are not less worthy of admiration and gratitude. She was the first to have her repasts served up on gold and silver vessels, embossed with precious stones; she set the fashion of constructing palanquins of silver, ebony, and sandal-wood, richly carved and ornamented. The apartments of her palace were lighted with tapers of ambergris; and she organized, as her personal bodyguard, a troop of female slaves, attired as pages. This last fashion became universal. Every courtier and man of fashion had his bodyguard of girl pages to execute his orders and wait upon his convenience. In short, "such," says a Moslem writer, "were the splendour, the richness, and prosperity of that reign, that it was termed 'the bridal season.' Its merits transcend all description, and surpass all eulogy." *

* We get a glimpse how all this wealth was obtained in the following anecdote told of al Fudail, the ascetic, whom I have already mentioned in Chapter III. Sofyan ibn Oyaina relates as follows concerning him:—"Haroun al Rashid called for us, and when we entered his presence al Fudail followed, with his cloak drawn over his face, and said to me, 'Tell me, Sofyan, which of these is the Commander of the Faithful?' 'There he is,' said I, pointing out al Rashid. He then addressed the khalif in these terms,—'O thou with the handsome face! art thou the man whose hand governeth this people, and who hast taken that duty on thy shoulders? Verily, thou hast taken on thyself a heavy burden.' Al Rashid wept on hearing these words, and ordered to each of us a purse of money. We all received the gift except al Fudail; and al Rashid said to him, 'O Abou Ali! if thou dost not think it lawful to accept it, give it to some poor debtor, or else therewith feed the hungry or clothe the naked.' He requested, however, the permission to refuse it; and when he went out I said to him, 'Thou hast done wrong, O Abou Ali! Why didst thou not take it and spend it in works of charity?' On this he seized me

The foremost figures in this crowded and magnificent scene, were those of Yahya and his gallant and accomplished sons. Their stately palace, on the bank of the Tigris, was thronged from morning to night with an eager crowd of suitors—envoys, poets, divines, men of all ranks and occupations thronging to partake of their ever-flowing liberality. The following anecdote is one out of scores which might be quoted concerning them. I select it as a curious specimen of the manners of the day:—

"I went to Yahya," said Ibrahim an Nadim, a celebrated musician and singer of that day, "and complained to him of a pecuniary embarrassment. He answered, 'Alas! what can I do for you? I have nothing at the present moment. However, I shall point out to you a thing which I hope you will be the man to execute. The agent of the governor of Egypt came to see me, and requested me to ask a gift from his master for myself. I refused, but he still insists. Now I am told that such an one, your slave girl, cost you three thousand dinars. So here is what I may do: I shall ask him to make me a present of that girl, and tell him that she pleases me very much; but do not you consent to sell her for less than thirty thousand dinars. You will then see what will happen.' Well, by Allah, I had scarcely time to look about me when in came the agent. He asked me how much I would take for the girl. I replied that I would not dispose of her for less than thirty thousand dinars. He continued bargaining with me, and finished by offering twenty thousand. When I heard the sum mentioned. I had not the heart to refuse it, and I sold her. Having received the money, I went to see Yahya, the son of Khaled. He asked me what I had done in the sale of the girl, and I replied, 'By Allah! I could not refrain from accepting twenty

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by the beard, and exclaimed, 'O, Abou Muhammad! how canst thou who art the chief jurisconsult of this city and a man whom all look up to, how canst thou make such a blunder? Had the money been lawfully acquired by those people (*the khalif and his officers*), it had been lawful for me to accept it.'"

thousand dinars as soon as I heard the offer.' He answered, 'That was mean-spirited on your part: but the agent of the governor of Persia has come to me on a similar mission. So here is your girl; take her back, and do not sell her for less than fifty thousand dinars when he goes to bargain with you for her. He will certainly give you the price.' This man came to me, and I asked fifty thousand dinars. He began to bargain, and when he offered me thirty thousand I had not the heart to refuse that sum, and could scarcely believe my ears. I accepted his offer, and then went to Yahya, the son of Khaled. 'For how much did you sell the girl?' said he. I told him, and he exclaimed, 'You unfortunate fellow! was your first fault not sufficient to prevent you from committing a second?' I replied, 'My heart was too weak to refuse a sum for which I could have never hoped.' 'Here,' said Yahya, 'is your girl; take her and keep her.' I replied, 'I have gained by her fifty thousand dinars, and am again become her owner. Bear witness that I declare her free, and that I promise to marry her.'" *

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* The point of these anecdotes will be missed if the reader fails to note the extraordinary moral confusion which pervades them. In order to understand aright the history of the Muhammadan world, this moral confusion must never be forgotten for a moment. In that seed field, not only have the wheat and the tares grown together, but the tares have always been regarded as equally valuable and nutritious as the wheat. Thus the following story is told of Jaafar ibn Yahya, as redounding greatly to his credit:—"Having learned that al Rashid was much depressed, in consequence of a Jewish astrologer having predicted to him that he should die within a year, he rode off to the khalif and found him deeply afflicted. The Jew had been detained as a prisoner by the khalif's orders, and Jaafar addressed him in these terms: 'You pretend that the khalif is to die in the space of so many days?' 'Yes,' said the Jew. 'And how long are you yourself to live?' 'So many years,' replied the other, mentioning a great number. Jaafar then said to the khalif, 'Put him to death, and you will be thus assured that he is equally mistaken respecting the length of your life, and that of his own.' This advice was followed by the khalif, who then thanked Jaafar for having dispelled his sadness. The Jew's body was exposed upon a gibbet . . . . . and the astrologer thus lost his life through his own folly."—*Ibn Khall.*, vol. i. p. 302.

But the Barmekides were Persians, and the Arabs beheld with bitter envy the monopoly of power possessed by a single family of that hated race. They laboured unceasingly to inspire Haroun with distrust of his too favoured subjects. The leader of this faction was Fadhl ibn Rabia, whose father had overthrown the vizier Yakoub in the khalifate of Mehdi. He had a double cause of enmity against them. On the accession of Haroun al Rashid, he had been removed from the post of vizier in order to make room for Yahya ibn Khaled. The Barmekides treated him with extreme haughtiness, and Jaafar on one occasion taunted him with the uncertainty of his origin—the worst insult that could be addressed to an Arab. The work of undermining began with the presentation to al Rashid of an unsigned memorial, which contained the following lines :—

"Say to God's trusty servant on earth, who has power to loose and to bind, 'Behold, the son of Yahya has become a sovereign like yourself; there is no difference between you! Your orders must yield to his, and orders dare not be resisted. He has built a palace, of which the like was never erected by the Persians or the Indian king. Pearls and rubies form its pavements, and the floor is of amber and aloes wood. We fear that he will inherit the empire, when you are hidden in the tomb. It is only the insolent slave who rivals his master in splendour."

The charge of unscrupulous ambition was speedily supplemented by the more damning one of infidelity. Haroun al Rashid was rigidly orthodox. He had caused the Hanifite jurisprudence to be arranged and written out in regular treatises. Never since the commencement of Islam had the pilgrimage been performed with such ceremony and such lavish almsgiving as by

him. And in all his actions he affected a scrupulous submission to the prescriptions of the law. The Barmekides were anything but orthodox. They, of course, professed an outward conformity with the dogmas of Islam; but, like the greater part of their fellow-countrymen, they were simple Theists, warmly attached to the principles of free discussion and general toleration in religious matters. Their palace was a gathering place, where men of all creeds met together on a footing of perfect equality, and where even the possibility of a revelation was freely and fearlessly questioned.* No wonder, therefore, if by the religious world they were set down as Nihilists. A petition was at last prepared in which the popular dissatisfaction at their abominable laxity of thought found free utterance. This was presented to the khalif by a theologian and popular preacher, an inhabitant of the town of Rakka,

* A curious account of one of these assemblies is to be found in Masoudi's "Meadows of Gold." Unfortunately, on that occasion, the subject of debate was not philosophical or theological, but the passion of "Love;" and it must be acknowledged that the speakers enunciate a great deal of wearisome nonsense. But the opening speech of Yahya ibn Khaled enumerates the subjects generally discussed. "You have," he says to his company, "discoursed at length on the theory of invisibility and visibility; on pre-existence and creation; on duration and stability; on movement and repose; the unity of the Divine substance; on existence and non-existence; the body and its accidents; the approbation and refutation of traditional authorities; on the absence and the existence of attributes in the Deity; force, actual and potential; substance, quantity, modality, relation; life and annihilation. You have inquired if the dignity of Imam be of Divine appointment or man's election; you have probed to the bottom all metaphysical questions in their principles and corollaries. Occupy yourselves, then, to-day with a description of love."—*Masoudi*, vol. vi. p. 368.

who was held in great veneration by the common people. "Prince of Believers!" so ran this document, "what will you reply to God upon the day of resurrection, or how will you justify yourself for having placed the Moslems under the domination of Yahya ibn Khaled, his sons and his relatives, and confided an empire of Believers to the charge of Atheists? For Yahya, his sons, and the members of his family are Atheists, and secretly attached to the doctrines of Atheism. They have no religion.' For the moment the khalif paid no heed to this petition; he even ordered the presenter of it to be imprisoned; but when his wrath fell upon the Barmekides, and he resolved utterly to destroy the family, the charge of apostasy served as a cloak to hide the veritable motive.

The khalif had a favourite sister, Abbassa. He was attached to her in the same unreasoning, passionate manner as he was to his favourite Jaafar. In his hours of recreation, he could not endure that either should be absent. But for a royal maiden, such as Abbassa, to appear unveiled before a stranger like Jaafar, would have been an act of gross impropriety. The khalif thought of a device for getting over this difficulty. He married his sister to Jaafar, having first taken from them a solemn oath that they were never to meet except in the presence of the khalif. For Jaafar the condition was an easy one. The fairest beauties of Asia and Europe were at his disposal in the slave markets of Baghdad. He could, without repining, acquiesce in a nominal union with the sister of his sovereign. It was otherwise with his

virgin bride. This splendid young stranger, breaking in upon the blank monotony of her harem life, overcame the passionate daughter of the East with a fascination she neither could nor desired to resist. Like the maiden of Verona, it speedily became to her an intolerable anguish thus to have bought the mansion of a love and not possess it. And she determined, at all hazards, to break through the restrictions her brother had imposed upon her. She sent letter after letter to Jaafar, entreating and reproaching him by turns. He drove off her messengers, and refused to receive her letters. Despairing of success by a direct appeal to him, she had recourse to his mother. She heaped upon her magnificent presents, loaded her with favours, and treated her with such deference and affection, that the woman became bound to her heart and mind. Then she made known the thing she desired of her. She set before the mother of Jaafar the great glory that would accrue to the family of the Barmekides if their blood was mingled with the sacred stream which flowed in the veins of the successors of God's Prophet. She pointed out on how secure a foundation their greatness would be built up, if she bore a son to Jaafar, and they thereby became linked to the khalifate by a double tie. She insisted that there was small occasion to fear the wrath of her brother. He loved her too well not to forgive them for her sake, if not for their own. The mother of Jaafar allowed herself to be persuaded, not unwillingly. She undertook to devise a plan whereby the young princess could be wedded to her husband without the knowledge of the

latter. It had long been her custom to provide her son with beautiful female slaves. According to the singular code of morality which existed in the Muhammadan world, this was regarded as an act of solicitude specially appropriate to the maternal relation. She now went to her son, and informed him that she was about to purchase, as a present to him, a slave of incomparable beauty, who had received a royal education, and was accomplished, gracious, possessed of a ravishing figure—in short, a marvel of loveliness; and "the bargain," she wound up with, "was nearly concluded." Jaafar was delighted at this affectionate attention on the part of his mother, and expressed his desire to become acquainted with this incomparable beauty as soon as possible. That crafty old lady, in order to heighten his impatience, began to create difficulties, interpose delays, till she had driven him to the verge of frenzy, when she announced that on a certain night, which she specified, she would bring the beautiful slave. She transmitted a message to Abbassa, instructing her in all that had passed, and bidding her hold herself in readiness. The hour arrived, and Abbassa, her beauty enhanced by all that art and love could think of, repaired secretly to the palace of Jaafar. That same night, Jaafar, his brain confused with the wine he had drunk, repaired to his chamber, and the slave, as he supposed her to be, was introduced. "What think you," said Abbassa, after they had been some time together—"what think you of the stratagems of princesses?" "Of what princess do you speak?" asked Jaafar. "Of myself," she replied,

"thy sovereign mistress, Abbassa, the daughter of Mehdi." Jaafar rose from his couch in mortal terror; the fumes of the wine were dissipated in a moment, and he recognized the abyss which had opened under his feet. "Mother," he cried, "you have brought me to ruin!"

A son was born to Abbassa, which was sent away secretly to Mekka, under the care of two trustworthy servants. The days meanwhile flowed on. Jaafar, his brothers, and their father continued to bask in the favour and affection of the khalif. Abbassa's intrigue, and the birth of a son, were known to the inmates of the harem, but not to the khalif himself. Yahya ibn Khaled was the intendant of the royal harem, and the rigorous supervision he exercised over the ladies was highly displeasing to Zobeide, the favourite wife of Haroun. In a moment of resentment, she revealed the story of Abbassa to the khalif. He was excited to the highest fury; nevertheless, he concealed from the Barmekides both the discovery he had made and the fierceness of his wrath. He merely gave out that he was about to proceed to Mekka, and ordered Jaafar to accompany him. Abbassa had no sooner discovered his intention, than she sent orders to the guardians of her child to fly with him to Yemen, and conceal him there. But the khalif, though he failed to get possession of the child, ascertained that all his wife had revealed to him was strictly true. The pilgrimage accomplished, he returned to Baghdad, revolving in his mind the best plan for utterly destroying the entire family of the Barmekides.

After a brief residence at Baghdad, the khalif re-

paired to his pleasure palace at Anbar. Despite of his efforts to conceal the vindictiveness which burned within him, Jaafar had perceived the estrangement. He knew the fierce and unforgiving character of his master too well not to understand what this foreboded. "Our fortune has passed away," he was heard to utter, in accents of deep dejection. He called for an astrolabe whereby to read the future; he was then in his house situated on the Tigris, and a boatman passed, as he gave the order, singing the following stanza—

"In his ignorance he takes counsel of the stars, but the Lord of the stars does what He will."

The words sounded prophetic, and Jaafar flung away the astrolabe and went out.

On the eve of Sunday, the last day of Mohurrum A.H. 187 (end of January, A.D. 803), the khalif let fall the long-suspended blow. The day and the evening had passed in sumptuous entertainments. Never was the khalif more gracious to Jaafar. He even accompanied him to his horse when the latter took leave, to return to his own tent. But then, summoning his page, Yasir, to a private audience, the khalif said to him, "I have chosen you for a business which I do not think fit to confide to any other; justify, then, the opinion which I have of you; and beware of resisting me, or you die." To this Yasir replied, "Were you to order me to kill myself, I would do it." "Go, then," said al Rashid, "and bring me immediately the head of Jaafar ibn Yahya." Yasir was confounded, and gave no answer. "Wretch!" exclaimed al Rashid, "do

you hesitate?" "It is a terrible business," replied the other; "would that I had died before this hour." "Execute my orders," retorted the inexorable khalif; and Yasir departed.

Jaafar, in the meanwhile, had repaired to his lodgings, and called in Abou Zakka, the blind poet, and his slave girl; the curtains of the apartment were closed, and the poet and musician were singing this song:—

"Leave us not; for every man must meet death either in the night or in the day.
Treasures, however well preserved, must one day be exhausted.
Could you be preserved from the attacks of misfortune, I would give you my own wealth, and that of my fathers, to secure your safety."

At this point Yasir entered; and Jaafar said to him, "I am happy to receive your visit, O Yasir; but I am displeased at your entering without permission." "My business," replied Yasir, "does not admit of delay." He then informed Jaafar of the khalif's order. "You are under obligations to me," said Jaafar, "and you can repay them at the present moment only." "You will find me," replied Yasir, "prompt to do anything, except disobey the orders of the Commander of the Faithful." "Return then," said Jaafar, "and tell him that you have put me to death. If he express regret, I shall owe you my life; and if not, you can fulfil your orders." "Impossible!" said Yasir. "Let me then go with you to his tent, that I may hear the answer he makes you, and if he persists in willing my death, you can execute his commands." To this proposal Yasir consented.

They proceeded together to the abode of the khalif, and Yasir, leaving Jaafar in an ante-room, entered the presence of al Rashid. "Have you done it?" was the inquiry. Yasir repeated what Jaafar had said. "Vile wretch!" exclaimed the khalif; "if you answer me another word, I will send you before him to the next world!" Yasir then retired, and having put Jaafar to death, he returned, bearing the head, which he placed before the khalif. Al Rashid gazed at it for some seconds, then, raising his eyes, he ordered Yasir to bring in two persons whom he named. When they came, he said, "Strike off Yasir's head, for I cannot bear the sight of Jaafar's murderer."

Simultaneously with the execution of Jaafar, the khalif had given orders to seize the persons of his father and brothers. As Sindi ibn Shahik, the chief of the armed police, relates as follows:—

"I was one night asleep in the upper room of the guard-house, which is on the western side of the Tigris, and I saw in a dream Jaafar, who stood before me in a robe dyed with saffron, and recited these verses:—

'Tis now as if not a soul had ever lived between al Hajm and as Safa!
As if there had never been one friend in Mekka to hold evening converse with another!
For we were its inhabitants; but we perished by the vicissitudes of time and the precariousness of fortune.'

"On this I awoke in terror, and related my vision to one of my friends, who answered, 'They are confused dreams, and it is not all which a man sees in sleep that will bear interpretation.' I then returned to my couch, but had scarcely closed my eyes, when I heard the challenge of the sentries and the guard, and the ringing of the bridles of the post-horses, and a knocking at the door of my chamber. I ordered it to be opened, and the eunuch Sallam al Abrash (whom

al Rashid never sent out but on important business) came upstairs. I shuddered to see him, and my joints trembled, for I imagined he had got some orders concerning me; but he sat down by my side, and handed me a letter, the seal of which I broke open, and lo! it contained these words,—'O, Sindi! this letter is written with our own hand, and sealed with the seal-ring which we wear on our finger; it will be presented to you by Sallam al Abrash, and as soon as you read it, even before you lay it out of your hand, go with Sallam to the house of Yahya ibn Khaled (may God not protect him!), and having seized on him, put him in heavy irons, and bear him to the prison in the city of al Mansour, which is called "the Prison for Zendiks." Order also your lieutenant, Badam ibn Abdallah, to go to Fadhl's at the same time that you ride off to the house of his father Yahya, and let him take him to the same prison. On finishing with these two, send some of your men to seize on the children, brothers, and relations of Yahya.'"

These orders were immediately executed; and the property of every member of the family was confiscated. For a moment the recollection of past services softened the heart of the khalif towards his old guardian and preceptor, Yahya, and he gave him permission to reside in the city of Rakka. But the old soldier-statesman preferred to share the prison of his son Fadhl. There, accordingly, both remained. At first they were allowed some liberty; but afterwards their condition fluctuated, as the hatred or compassion of the vindictive khalif obtained the ascendancy over him.*

* The following incident is recorded of their prison life:—"It is said that Masrur, the eunuch, was sent by him (*i.e.*, the khalif) to the prison, and that he told the guardian to bring al Fadhl before him. When he was brought out, he addressed him thus: 'The Commander of the Faithful sends me to say that he ordered thee to make a true statement of thy property, and that thou didst pretend to do so; but he is assured that thou hast still great wealth in reserve; and his orders to me are, that if thou dost not inform me where the money is, I am to give thee two hundred strokes of a

It was a tremendous fall, from the height of splendour and magnificence to the coldness and solitude of a dungeon; and the following passage from one of the

whip. I should, therefore, advise thee not to prefer thy riches to thyself.' On this, al Fadhl looked up to him and said, 'By Allah! I made no false statements, and were the choice offered to me of being sent out of the world, or of receiving a single stroke of a whip, I should prefer the former alternative; that, the Commander of the Faithful well knoweth, and thou also knowest full well that we maintained our reputation at the expense of our wealth. How then could we now shield our wealth at the expense of our bodies? If thou hast really got any orders, let them be executed.' On this, Masrur produced some whips which he brought with him rolled up in a napkin, and ordered his servants to inflict on al Fadhl two hundred stripes. They struck him with all their force, using no moderation in their blows, so that they nearly killed him. There was in that place a man skilled in treating wounds, who was called in to attend upon al Fadhl. When he saw him he observed that fifty strokes had been inflicted upon him; and when the others declared that two hundred had been given, he asserted that his back bore the traces of fifty, and not more. He then told Fadhl that he must lie down on his back on a reed-mat, so that he might tread on his breast. Al Fadhl shuddered at the proposal, but having at length given his consent, they placed him on his back. The operator then trod upon him, after which he took him by the arms and dragged him along the mat, by which means a great quantity of flesh was torn off the back. He then proceeded to dress the wounds, and continued his services regularly, till, one day, when examining them, he immediately prostrated himself in thanksgiving to God. They asked him what was the matter, and he replied that the patient was saved, because new flesh was forming. He then said, 'Did I not say he had received fifty strokes? Well, by Allah! one thousand strokes could not have left worse marks; but I merely said so that he might take courage, and thus aid my efforts to cure him.' Al Fadhl, on his recovery, borrowed ten thousand dirhems from a friend and sent them to the doctor, who returned them. Thinking that he had offered too little, he borrowed ten thousand more; but the man refused them and said, 'I cannot accept a salary for curing the greatest among the generous; were it even twenty thousand dinars, I should refuse them.' When this was told to al Fadhl, he declared

Arabian poets was, we are told, frequently in the mouth of Yahya during the dark and dismal season of his captivity:—

"We address our complaints to God in our sufferings, for it is His hand which removeth pain and affliction.
We have quitted the world, and yet we exist therein; we are not of the living, neither are we of the dead."
When the jailor happens to enter our cell, we wonder and exclaim, 'This man has come from the world!'"

Yahya remained in prison till his death, which event took place on the 3rd Mohurrum, A.H. 190 (November, A.D. 805). He died suddenly, without any previous illness, being then seventy years of age. His son repeated the funeral service over him; and he was laid in a grave dug on the border of the river Euphrates. A paper was found on him, on which was written in his own hand—"The accuser has gone forward to the tribunal, and the accused will soon follow. The kadi will be that equitable Judge who is never unjust, and who has no need of taking evidence." This significant document was conveyed to the khalif, who was deeply troubled in spirit by its perusal. He "wept the remainder of that day, and his countenance for some days after bore striking marks of sorrow."

The son followed his father to the grave after a lapse of three years; and he too died in prison during the month of Mohurrum, A.H. 193. When al Rashid

that such an act of generosity surpassed all that he himself had done during the whole course of his life. For he had learned that the doctor was poor, and in great distress."—*Ibn Khall.*, vol. ii. pp. 464, 65.

was informed of his death, he said, "My fate is near unto his;" and so it proved, for he expired at Tous on the eve of Saturday, of the latter Joumada, A.H. 193 (March, A.D. 809).

The two other brothers, Muhammad and Mousa, had died under the hands of the executioner, together with a multitude of relatives, friends, and dependents. It was the old story—"to be wrath with one we love doth work like madness in the brain." It seemed to be the endeavour of the khalif to blot out the very name of Barmekide from the remembrance of men. But he branded it ineradicably in his own heart; and it is recorded, on the evidence of his sister, that he never knew what it was to be happy since he put Jaafar to death.

The last glimpse we get of the once brilliant family of the Barmekides is from the following narrative:—Muhammud ibn Abd al Rahman, chief of the prayer at Koufa, relates—"On a certain day, which was the Festival of Sacrifices, I went into my mother's, and found with her a woman of respectable mien, but dressed in shabby clothes. 'Do you know who this is?' said my mother. 'No,' I replied. 'This,' said she, 'is the mother of Jaafar the Barmekide.' On this, I turned towards her, and saluted her with respect; we then conversed together for some time, after which I said, 'Madam, what is the strangest thing you have seen?' To which she answered, 'There was a time when this anniversary found me with four hundred female slaves standing behind me to await my orders, and yet I thought my son did not provide for me in a

manner adequate to my rank; but now my only wish is to have two sheepskins—one to serve me for a bed, and the other for a covering.' I gave her five hundred dirhems, and she nearly died from excess of joy. She afterwards continued to visit us till death placed a separation between us."

# CHAPTER III.

## THE CIVIL WAR.

### A.D. 803–820.

WHEN the khalif Haroun al Rashid resolved upon the extirpation of the Barmekides, he foresaw a part, at least, of the consequences. Since the Abbasides had come to power, the old rivalry between the Arabs of Modhar and the Arabs of Yemen had been replaced—as I have tried to show in the preceding chapters—by that between Persian and Arab. The court of the khalif, the court of every provincial governor, were the theatres of this conflict. But, on the whole, the power of the Persians had waxed, and that of the Arabs waned. Under the protecting favour of the Barmekides and the vizier Yakoub, Persian practices and Persian habits of thought had obtained an undoubted ascendancy in Muhammadan Asia. The sweeping destruction that had fallen upon the Barmekides was, therefore, a triumph for the Arab and orthodox party, as great as it was unhoped for. The khalif, however, seems to have thought that the hatred engendered by the triumph of the one faction and the humiliation of the other would, unless foreseen and provided for, render his dominions the scene of bitter and intermin-

able civil dissensions. To avert this, he had recourse to the desperate expedient of dividing his dominions between his two sons, leaving to Mamoun, the eastern provinces, where the Persian element predominated, and to Emin, Irak, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, and Northern Africa. It was further enacted that Emin should fix his capital at Baghdad, and Mamoun at Merou; and that on the demise of either brother, the whole empire should be united under the sceptre of the survivor. To make this arrangement as solemn and binding as possible, it was ratified in the Kaaba itself. When the khalif visited Mekka to inquire after the child of Abbassa, he took with him his two sons. In the house of God, the young men bound themselves by an oath never to engage in hostilities against each other; all the nobles and great men who were present affixed their signatures to the document, in which the conditions of the partition of power were laid down; and it was then affixed to the door of the holy place. But the document fell from the hand of the man whose duty it was to affix it; and the ready superstition of the time interpreted the incident as a sign that the document would be speedily trampled on by those who had sworn to observe its conditions.

But the fall of the Barmekides brought with it other consequences, which touched the khalif more nearly, and which he had not foreseen. It was in his power to destroy the ablest soldiers and statesmen he possessed, but it was out of his power to replace them. The khalif discovered what they had been to him, when he could no longer rely upon their ability. The busi-

ness of the State fell into horrible confusion. From all parts of the kingdom came the intelligence of revolt and disorder. "Some people," the khalif was heard to say, "impelled us to punish our ablest and most faithful advisers, and then made us believe that they themselves were capable of replacing them; but when we did what they wanted, they were not of the least use to us." He then muttered this line to himself—

"Infamous wretches! spare us your calumnies, or fill with ability the place which they filled so well."

In Khorasan, and the regions beyond the Oxus, the disorder was naturally greatest, and the insurrectionary movements most formidable. The population there instinctively perceived that the fall of the Barmekides foreboded the restoration of that Arab supremacy from which, under the conduct of Abou Moslem, they had emancipated themselves at the cost of so much blood. They had, too, a present proof of what that supremacy meant, in the character of the Arab governor who ruled Khorasan. This man was named Ali ibn Isa. He had established his residence at Balkh, and mercilessly pillaged the people in order to gratify his passion for building. The people of Khorasan had appealed to the khalif for protection against his extortions, and Haroun had summoned his governor to Rhe to give an account of his stewardship. But Ali knew the way to blind the eyes of his sovereign. He repaired to Rhe with such magnificent presents for the khalif and his Court, that he was sent back to Khorasan with honour, and permitted to go on plundering the

people without let or hindrance. The discontent thereby engendered needed but a spark to kindle it into flame, and this fell, immediately after the fall of the Barmekides.

In A.H. 190 (A.D. 806), there was resident at Samarkand a certain Rafi, the grandson of the ill-fated Nasr ibn Seyaur, who had perished in the revolt of Abou Moslem. Like his ancestor, this Rafi was a dashing and courageous soldier; and gifted with a handsome face and figure, and gay manners, he was as renowned for his gallantries in the field of love as for his exploits in the field of battle. There existed an attachment between this cavalier and a lady, the wife of a freedman of the khalif. Rafi persuaded the lady to feign apostasy from Islam, whereupon, in devout horror, her husband pronounced the irrevocable sentence of divorce.* Then the lady returned to the bosom of the true faith, and became the wife of Rafi. A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind; and judging from certain antecedents of the khalif, he might have been expected to applaud this ignominious device of the gay Rafi. He was, however, exceedingly wrath, and sent orders that Rafi

* According to Muhammadan law, the formula of divorce repeated three times renders the reunion of the husband and wife impossible, unless the wife has first been married and then divorced by some other man. This provision, in some Muhammadan countries, especially in Egypt, has been the cause of an exceedingly revolting form of immorality. A husband, in a fit of rage, divorces his wife three times. He then desires to take her back; but the only manner in which he can do so is by obtaining some one to marry her for a single night, and divorcing her in the morning. There is, of course, a prophetic tradition which elevates this practice to the level of a divine decree. Its effects upon the purity and chastity of women are not difficult to divine.

should be thrown into prison, and the adulterous wife paraded through the streets of Samarkand, with her face blackened, and seated upon a donkey. The former order was executed, the latter evaded. Rafi soon after escaped from prison, and finding that his wife was withheld from him, called upon the people to revolt. The people, sorely harassed by the tyranny and exactions of Ali, responded in crowds to his summons. The city was seized, the officials either fled or were placed under arrest, and Samarkand became a centre of rebellion. Ali sent his son to quell the revolt; his son was defeated and killed. He then took the field in person, but he likewise was defeated by the intrepid Rafi. At the news of this second disaster, the people of Balkh also rose up in rebellion. They slew the officer to whom Ali had entrusted the care of the city. The palaces of Ali and his sons were sacked, and search being made for hid treasures, an immense sum of money was found buried in the garden. The insurgents proclaimed themselves good subjects of the khalif, but that against Ali they would fight to the death. Ali, in the meanwhile, defeated at Samarkand, and cut off from Balkh, had fled to Merou, whence he sent intelligence to the khalif of what had happened, and demanded reinforcements.

The khalif perceived that the first step to the restoration of order must be the removal of Ali. It was a step requiring management. Ali had at his command a large army, and great wealth; and should he learn beforehand what the khalif purported to do, he, too, would in all probability become an

insurgent. Among the most eminent of the Persian generals at the Court of the khalif, was Hartama ibn Ayan. Him the khalif selected as Governor of Khorasan. "I am about," said Haroun to him, "to confide a mission to you, which must be kept an absolute secret, until a given hour. If your shirt even should guess this secret, you must destroy it. I have nominated you Governor of Khorasan; but should Ali ibn Isa become aware of it, he would resist you with arms in his hand. Consequently, give out to your troops that you are marching to aid him; but when you reach Merou, arrest him, and compel him to restore all such property as he has wrongfully taken from the people." The khalif then wrote with his own hand the order appointing Hartama to the government of Khorasan; and he, at the same time, gave to him three letters. Two of these were addressed to the soldiers and the people of Khorasan, calling upon them to obey the orders of the new governor; the third was addressed to Ali ibn Isa. This was couched in the following terms:—

"In the name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate,—O Son of a Prostitute! I have loaded you with favours; from the rank of a mere captain of guards, I elevated you to that of governor, and conferred upon you the government of Khorasan, disregarding the advice of my ministers, who said that you were not fit for so important a charge; and this is how you recompense me! You oppress the Faithful, and alienate my subjects from me. Now I send Hartama charged to arrest thee, to despoil thee of thy wealth, to demand of thee an account of thy actions, and to compel thee to restore all which thou hast wrongfully got possession of. Remit to him thy power and obey his orders."

Hartama, taking with him these secret instructions,

set out with twenty thousand men. Ali had not a suspicion of the purpose of his coming. He received him at the gates of Merou with the honours due to the representative of his sovereign. The two chiefs, riding side by side, passed through the streets of the city to the palace of the governor. They entered the palace together; a troop of Hartama's cavalry remained without, mounted. A repast was served, and after dinner, Ali said to Hartama, "I have prepared your quarters in the palace, and to-morrow we will discuss politics together." Hartama replied, "The Prince of Believers has given me a letter for you." He took him to a corner of the room, and there tendered to him the autograph letter of the khalif. Ali opened it, and his hand trembled as his eyes caught the opening salutation, "Son of a Prostitute." He yielded without further ado. Hartama loaded him with fetters; and thus manacled and chained, the fallen tyrant was, day after day, brought into the great Mosque of Merou, and all who had suffered from his exactions had their complaints investigated, until full restitution had been made.

But during this time Rafi had consolidated his power in Samarkand. All the Muhammadan dominions beyond the Oxus acknowledged his authority. And so great was his power, that Hartama did not deem it prudent to attack him without additional reinforcements. His representations induced the khalif to take the field in person.

The khalif was at this time in bad health, and the fatigues of the march greatly aggravated his sickness.

He crossed the heights of Hulwan; at Kirmanshahan he harangued his troops, and showed, despite of himself, how deeply he felt the loss of his trusty lieutenants, the Barmekides. "There have been," he said, "troubles in the West and in the East. The West is pacified; and I shall know equally well how to pacify the East, though Yahya and his sons are no longer here to aid me." These expressions of regret were considered by his courtiers to detract seriously from the dignity of the khalif; and their frequent recurrence was regarded as a very grievous scandal.

From Kirmanshahan the khalif proceeded to Rhe, and thence to Jurjan. Here, at first, he seemed to gain in health and strength. And here was brought before him the deprived Governor of Khorasan, whose treasures, notwithstanding the restitutions he had been compelled to make, are said to have required fifteen hundred camels for their conveyance. Haroun sent him chained to Baghdad, directing his son, Muhammad al Emin, to retain him in close confinement. But now, the health of the khalif becoming again worse, he set out for Tous, the air being more bracing there, and arrived at that city in the month of Safar, A.H. 193.

At the same time when Haroun quitted Jurjan, Hartama crossed the Oxus, marched on Bokhara, and delivered battle at the gates of the city to Beshir, the brother of Rafi. The army of Beshir was routed and himself taken prisoner. He was despatched, guarded, to the khalif at Tous. Haroun was sick unto death

when the prisoner was brought before him. He had, that morning, chosen the shroud in which he was to be buried, and caused the grave to be dug wherein he was to lie. On seeing the work completed, he exclaimed, in the words of the Koran, "My wealth hath not profited me! my power hath perished from me!" (Koran, Sura lxix. 28, 29). But the approach of death had not softened the heart of the pitiless and vindictive khalif. "Thou adversary of God!" he said to Beshir, "by thy malice and that of thy brother, in subverting my authority in Khorasan, have I been compelled to undertake this painful journey. But, by Him who created Haroun, thou shalt perish by a death so painful, that its agonies shall infinitely surpass all that has ever yet been known." Then, dying as he was, he sent for a butcher, and ordered him, there and then, to cut the prisoner into pieces, limb by limb. Each limb, as it was separated from the quivering body, was laid at the feet of the implacable khalif. When life at last was extinct, the body was hacked into four pieces, in the presence and by the command of the khalif, who then fainted away.

Such was the last act of the "*good* Haroun al Rashid." Two days after, he was dead.

The death of the khalif was the signal for internal discord. The division of the Muhammadan Empire into an Arabic and Persian kingdom brought on the very result it was intended to avert. It clearly defined and gave cohesion to the two conflicting parties; and the instinct of self-preservation hurried on a collision. For the unwise stipulation, that on the

demise of either Emin or Mamoun, the survivor should succeed to the sovereignty of his dominions, opened a future of gloom and uncertainty to Arab and Persian alike. To the Arab there was the chance of Persian—to the Persian that of Arabian ascendancy; and it became a matter of primary importance to the party leaders on either side to secure their position, by the deposition of either Emin or Mamoun.

Emin was naturally the head of the Arabic and orthodox party. Not only had he been nominated the sovereign of Baghdad, the guardian of the Sacred Cities, and the spiritual head of the Muhammadan world, but he possessed a direct right to these dignities in virtue of his birth. He was the first of the Abbaside khalifs whose father and mother had both been of Arab blood; for Haroun and his wife Zubeid were cousins. Her son, Muhammad al Emin, was a young man of noble presence, great strength, and remarkable for his personal courage; but indolent and incapable, and caring for nothing but music, singing, drinking, banquets, and amusements. He became a passive tool in the hands of his chief adviser, Fadhl ibn Rabia.

Mamoun was the son of Haroun by a Persian mother, and was, therefore, regarded by his Persian subjects as one of themselves. He was a man of more vigorous character and greater intellectual capacity than his idle and frivolous brother. But these qualities developed later, under the stress of difficulties. At the time of his father's death he was not less subject to the ascendancy of a favourite minister than his brother.

This favourite was a Persian by name, Fadhl ibn Sahl, and his supremacy over his nominal master was so great, that he did not hesitate to bid against him for the purchase of a female slave. The Oriental historians who recount this incident, manifestly regard it as a piece of audacity without parallel in the annals of the East

The father of Fadhl ibn Rabia had been the chamberlain of the khalif Abou Jaafar al Mansour. He stood high in the confidence of that sovereign and of his son Mehdi, and had always been a bitter enemy of the Persians. So long as he lived he had been the recognized leader of the Arab party; and to him, more than to any other man, was due the blow given to Persian ascendancy, in the downfall and imprisonment of the vizier Yakoub ibn Daoud. When his father died, Fadhl ibn Rabia became the leader of the Arabic faction at the court of the khalif. He was vizier to the khalif Hadi, and had been removed from that post by the khalif Haroun al Rashid, in favour of Yahya ibn Khaled, the Barmekide. Disappointed ambition came in, therefore, to supplement race hatred; and during the period of their splendour, the Barmekides had no more pertinacious enemy than Fadhl ibn Rabia. It is related that Yahya was one day holding a court for the despatch of public business, when Fadhl came in with ten written applications from different persons. To each of these Yahya made an objection, and ended by refusing his sanction to every one of them; on which Fadhl gathered them up, saying, "Go back to those who sent you! applications repelled and rejected."

He then turned to go out, and recited the following lines :—

"Fortune may yet alter her present course, and produce some change. Fortune is apt to stumble in her gait; she may grant certain wishes, procure satisfaction for certain offences, and replace this state of things by another."

Yahya, overhearing these words, recalled him, and set his approval to all the memorials. Fadhl, however, continued to work underhand against him, and won so much upon the confidence of al Rashid, that upon the fall of the Barmekides he was raised to the post of vizier, and on the death of Haroun became the right-hand man of his son al Emin.

Fadhl ibn Sahl was a Persian by birth; he traced his descent back to the old Persian sovereigns, and had been educated in the old Magian creed. He became a convert to Islam in the reign of Haroun al Rashid, to whose court he had been introduced by the Barmekides. When, for the first time, he entered the presence of the khalif, he was so completely overcome with confusion that he could not utter a word. Haroun, who had expected to see an adroit and ready courtier, turned towards Yahya with the look of one who had been deceived; but Fadhl, recovering himself, said, "Commander of the Faithful! it is an excellent proof of a servant's merit, that his heart is seized with respect in the presence of his master." To this the khalif replied, "If you kept silent that you might frame this answer, I must say that you have succeeded well; but if it came to you on the moment, it is better and better." Through the influence of the Barmekides, Fadhl

was appointed tutor and guardian of the young Prince Mamoun. And on the fall of the Barmekides, his intimacy with the future sovereign of Khorasan naturally induced the Persians to look up to him as their chief hope and support; while in Fadhl ibn Rabia, the Persian statesman saw not only the leader of the opposite faction, but the enemy and destroyer of his old benefactors.

The hatred and opposing ambitions of these two men—Fadhl ibn Rabia and Fadhl ibn Sahl—occasioned a civil war, which extended over the whole of the Asiatic dominions of the khalif.

When the khalif Haroun left Baghdad on his last expedition, he left his son Emin as his lieutenant in the city; but Mamoun, under the advice of Fadhl ibn Sahl, accompanied his father. He was not, however, with his father at the moment of the latter's death, having been sent forward to prepare for his reception in Khorasan. On his death-bed Haroun al Rashid had instructed his vizier, Ibn Rabia, that the troops and money which were with him were to be made over to his son Mamoun, in order to enable him to make head against the insurgents in Khorasan. Nevertheless, his master's eyes were no sooner closed in death, than Ibn Rabia, in obedience to instructions received from al Emin, marched the army back to Baghdad, and treated with derision the remonstrances of an envoy sent after him by the Prince Mamoun. With this act, the contest between the two brothers may be said to have commenced. Fadhl ibn Sahl spared no pains to impress the full import of it upon the mind of his young master.

If al Emin had set at nought the last wishes of his father, it was clear that he had no intention to respect the conditions of the agreement suspended in the Kaaba. Mamoun must decide, and decide at once, between two alternatives—either to forfeit altogether his rights, present and to come, or aim at the supreme headship of the Muhammadan world. The latter was the safest, as it was the most aspiring, policy. Fadhl ibn Sahl dwelt upon the history of Abou Moslem as an example of the irresistible force residing in the people of Persia—a force which would be put forth with so much the greater energy on the present occasion, because it would be solicited by a khalif of Persian blood. Every Persian soldier would grasp his sword with the sense that he was doing battle for the independence of his country, and the restoration of her ancient glory under a native prince. Such counsels chimed in with the youthful ambition of Mamoun. He began without delay to strengthen his position. He made peace with the rebels beyond the Oxus; he remitted the revenue of Khorasan for an entire year, and promised rewards and honours to his generals if they remained staunch in their support of his cause. At the same time he diligently cultivated popularity with the many by frequent durbars, at which he attended in person, in order to hear petitions and administer justice. But he was careful not to mar the seeming justice of his cause by hastening to come to an open rupture with his brother. He knew he had only to wait, and the action of his brother would force him (Mamoun) to take up arms in self-defence. Pending

that time, he maintained an attitude of cordiality and submission, sending to al Emin rich presents of horses, arms, perfumes, slaves, and whatever of rare or valuable was to be found in the province of Khorasan.

Emin, meanwhile, under the conduct of his vizier, Ibn Rabia, had broken the conditions of his father's testament one after another. Ibn Rabia knew that his proceedings after the death of the late khalif must have aroused an anger in the mind of Mamoun which would leave little uncertainty as to his fate, should that prince get him into his power. A variety of powerful motives, therefore—his ambition, his national antipathies, and the sense of personal danger—impelled him to urge his young master forward on a career which must end in his own or his brother's ruin. Emin's first step was to set aside the succession of Mamoun, and declare his own infant son, Mousa, the heir to the khalifate. This was followed by the omission, by order, of the name of Mamoun in the public prayer, and the substitution in its stead of his son's name. Next, he caused the agreement suspended by his father over the door of the Kaaba to be torn down and destroyed. And, finally, he sent a deputation to Mamoun, demanding the cession of three of his provinces. This demand provoked, as it was intended to do, a peremptory refusal; and both parties began to prepare for war. (A.H. 195; A.D. 810.)

Still under the advice of Ibn Rabia, Emin released from prison Ali ibn Isa, the late tyrannical governor of Khorasan, and placed him in command of his troops. This appointment was a grievous blunder. Ibn Rabia had reasoned that the enmity which existed between

Ali and the people of Khorasan would make it impossible for Mamoun to seduce the one from his allegiance without forfeiting the attachment of the others. And the more to stimulate the zeal of Ali, the government of Khorasan was conferred upon him as the reward of his anticipated victory. But in Khorasan the effect of this appointment was to confirm the people in their devotion to Mamoun. The acts of Ali were still fresh in their memories; and they fought now not only in the service of a clement and liberal prince, but to beat back the approaches of a cruel and avaricious ruler. But no misgivings troubled the confident spirit of Emin. Fifty thousand men, lavishly equipped, were placed under the orders of Ali; Zobeide, the mother of Emin, presented that general with a set of silver chains in which to bring back the captive Mamoun; and at Nehrewan, eight miles distant from Baghdad, the khalif reviewed his army, and "standing upright on the back of his charger," gave his last instructions to Ali and his leading officers. On receiving intelligence of this movement, Mamoun set his army in motion. It was commanded by a Persian general, Tahir ibn Hosain.

The two hosts encountered at Rhe; and the army of Ali was completely routed, and fled, leaving their leader dead upon the field. Rhe opened its gates, and took the oath of allegiance to Mamoun. That prince at once assumed the dignity of khalif. Emin received the news of the defeat with characteristic levity. He and a favourite slave were fishing together when the intelligence was announced to him. "Do not trouble

me," was the remark made, by way of reply; "Kouther has already caught two fine fish, and I have not caught one."

Baghdad did not take the news so quietly. The population was mainly Arab; and among the Arabs, the deeds of Abou Moslem were occurrences not to be forgotten. Men and women remembered how, in his time, the streets of the cities of Khorasan had run red with Arab blood shed by his partisans like so much water. The advance of a Persian force, flushed by success, and animated doubtless by the same vindictive spirit, prognosticated the perpetration of similar atrocities. The citizens assembled in noisy and menacing crowds. The troops broke into open mutiny. A liberal donation restored quiet for the moment; and twenty thousand men consented to march and stay the advance of the enemy. They were defeated, shut up in the fortress of Hamadan, and, after a siege of two months, compelled to surrender.

Emin, however, contrived to scrape together a third army; but this also was defeated, and Tahir, marching without opposition through the defiles of Hulwan, established himself at Schalaschan, on the summit of the mountains.

The defeat of this last force paralysed Baghdad with terror. No one could be found to cross arms with the invincible Tahir. But at this juncture a reinforcement of twenty thousand men, levied in Basra and Koufa, arrived to encourage the despairing khalif. They marched out full of enthusiasm, and desiring nothing better than to swallow up the Persian invaders.

But Tahir knew his men—these Arabs of Koufa and Basra. He sent spies among them, who circulated a story that Emin was distributing large donations of money to the soldiery still in Baghdad. A part wished to return to participate in this liberality; a part to execute the purpose of their march. The two factions came to blows; many were killed on both sides; and ultimately the whole army retreated, or rather ran, in great confusion, and utterly disorganized, back to Baghdad.

In the interval, a fresh calamity had fallen upon the hapless Emin. He had built great hopes upon finding in Syria a counterpoise to Khorasan. The Syrian hatred of the Persian would, he supposed, cause them to rally to his standard. But the difficulties of Emin, so far from awakening a spirit of loyalty in the people of Syria, kindled only a desire for independence. In Damascus, one Ali ibn Abdallah, a great-grandson of the khalif Muawia, and descended on his mother's side, from the khalif Ali, proclaimed himself khalif, as combining in his single person the rights of both Ali and Muawia. The Kelbites espoused his cause; and early in the year 196 (A.D. 812), he had complete possession of Damascus, Kinnesrin, Emessa, and other important places. But the old tribal hatred checked his career without the interposition of Emin.

The Kelbites having got a khalif, the Kaisites deemed it incumbent upon them to start one of their own. They selected one Muhammad ibn Salih. This having been done, Kaisites and Kelbites fought together in and around Damascus, until the former

obtained the upper hand. Emin sent Abd al Malek ibn Salih to quell this rebellion. This famous general, since the death of Haroun, had languished in prison, and now, before he could effect anything of importance, he sickened and died; and his successor, Hosain, was obliged to return to Baghdad, in consequence of mutiny having broken out among his troops. Emin was imprudent enough to send a summons to Hosain to appear before him immediately on the arrival of that general at Baghdad. Hosain, suspecting that the khalif harboured evil designs against him, on account of the sedition in his army, refused to present himself, and made use of the night to form a party against Emin, and in favour of Mamoun. On the following morning (Rejeb, A.H. 196; March-April, 812), with the people who had joined in his enterprise, he rushed into the royal residence, called "The Castle of Eternity," took Emin and his mother prisoner, and confined them in the castle of Mansour. He then declared Emin dethroned, and proclaimed Mamoun as the legitimate khalif.

The bribing of the royal bodyguard had rendered this exploit easy of achievement, but the success was of brief duration. The inhabitants of Baghdad, who hated the Khorasaners, the army whose greed Hosain had no means for satisfying, the ministers and generals of Emin, who dreaded a change of sovereigns, and all those who were jealous of Hosain's future influence with Mamoun, combined against him. They liberated the khalif, and brought Hosain in fetters before him. Emin pardoned him; but Hosain, doubtful how long

this clemency would endure, fled the next day from Baghdad with a few intimate friends. He took the route by Nahrewan to Hulwan in order to obtain shelter in the Persian army. He was pursued by a detachment of troops, and overtaken. In the skirmish that ensued he was killed, and his head conveyed to the khalif.

In the meanwhile the Persian armies were converging upon Baghdad. Mamoun had despatched a second force of 20,000 men, under command of Hartama ibn Ayan, to co-operate with Tahir. They advanced by different routes—Hartama marching direct upon Baghdad through Nahrewan, and Tahir proceeding through the province of Ahwaz. The town of Ahwaz was occupied after a successful engagement; Basra Koufa and Wasit were taken possession of without resistance; Mekka and Medina declared for the khalif Mamoun. Arrived at Madain, Tahir sent word to Hartama, who was awaiting intelligence of his movements at Hulwan; the latter then set his troops in motion, and the two armies converged upon the devoted capital. The troops which Emin opposed to them were defeated, and the siege commenced with the commencement of the year A.H. 197.

The gates of the city were barricaded. Muhammad al Emin took up his abode in the palace of his mother in the city, which was defended by immense gates of iron. He encamped one large force at the "gate of Khorasan," opposite to which were posted the troops of Hartama; and another at the "gate of

Basra," which was menaced by Tahir. Hartama had pitched his camp at Nahrewan, at a distance of eight miles from the outer defences of the city; and Tahir was stationed on the road to Basra, at a spot known as the "Garden of the Gate Anbar," distant four miles from Baghdad.

We get a glimpse of the unhappy khalif at this crisis of his fortunes. Ibramin ibn al Mehdi relates how al Emin sent for him to cheer his spirits, depressed by the shadow of impending calamity. He found him seated in a rich pavilion, pitched upon the banks of the Tigris, and there was placed before him a crystal cup, filled with wine and ornamented with various stones. A favourite slave-girl was sent for to cheer the company with her singing. At the command of the khalif, she placed her lute upon her knees, and commenced to sing thus:—

> "On my life, Kuleyb counted more allies, his prudence was greater than thine, and yet behold his corpse stained with his blood."

At these words the khalif rose up. He silenced the singer, pouring forth upon her a stream of maledictions, and then subsided into a gloomy reverie. However, the wine circled round, and the conversation flowed freely; and the khalif, resuming an air of cheerfulness, called for another air. Again the slave sang—

> "They had killed him to usurp his place; it is thus that formerly Khosroes succumbed to the snares of Merzuban."

Al Emin, in high wrath, ordered her to be silent, and

became more sombre than ever. But again, after awhile, his courtiers succeeded in restoring his gaiety; and for the third time, he turned to his slave and called upon her to sing, and for the third time she commenced to sing as follows:—

"It would seem that there is not one friendly face left between *al Hajoun* and Safa; it would seem that the sweet evening parties had ceased at Mekka.

"Yes, we inhabited that country; but the vicissitudes of fortune and the severities of destiny have driven us from our home."

"Get out from here," shouted Emin, "and may you be accursed of God!" The slave, on rising, struck her foot against the crystal cup that was placed in front of the khalif. The vase was broken and the vine was spilled. "At that instant," says the story-teller, "the moon shone with all her brilliance over the banks of the Tigris, and on the Castle of Paradise, and I heard a voice utter these words: '*The matter is decreed concerning that which ye inquire*' (Koran, Sura xii. 41). I arose, seeing the khalif tremble; and then from the other end of the castle, we heard another voice chanting these verses:—

"Let nothing surprise you again; an event is at hand which passes all amazement;
A horrible catastrophe that will terrify the man full of pride!"

The state of affairs was, in truth, critical for both the khalif and his subjects. Every week the investment narrowed the circle it had formed round the devoted city. The besiegers cut off the supply of provisions; war-machines were erected; and under the weight

of the missiles projected from them, the suburbs were rendered uninhabitable; the palaces of the nobility were crushed into ruins. Within Baghdad itself, civil disorder aggravated the horrors of war. Two parties were formed, the one desiring to surrender the city, the other to defend it to the last. Between these factions there was perpetual fighting in the streets. The prisons were broken open, and the capital inundated by hordes of criminals, who robbed and murdered with impunity, and carried off women and children in open day. Emin melted down his vases of gold and silver to obtain funds wherewith to stimulate the failing courage of his troops. They were ready to take his gifts; but they could not be got to fight. His officers, one after another, deserted into the camp of Tahir, who was careful to give a gracious reception to all who sought his protection. And in the commencement of the year 198, Emin made propositions of surrender to Tahir. He was willing to abdicate the throne in favour of his brother, provided a safe-conduct was granted to himself and his family. These propositions were rejected by Tahir. He had sent to Merou for instructions as to the treatment of Emin when reduced to extremity; and Mamoun, by way of reply, had transmitted to his general a shirt without an opening for the head. Tahir understood the meaning of the symbol.

But at this conjuncture, new and strange allies rose up to avert the fall of the khalif al Emin. These were the rabble of the city of Baghdad. Why or wherefore, it is hard to say; but now, when he had

been abandoned by his chiefs, and nearly all his regular troops, the rabble of the city espoused the sinking cause of al Emin with extraordinary ardour. They formed themselves into troops, under duly appointed leaders. For these leaders, a certain number of the strongest vagabonds were told off to officiate as horses. The necks of these remarkable chargers were adorned with bells; and they fabricated tails for themselves out of brooms and fly-flappers. The rank and file wore helmets fashioned from the leaves of the cocoanut tree; a rude shield was suspended from their arms; and they were armed with slings, lances, and heavy clubs. Thus rudely equipped, they, nevertheless, offered a vigorous resistance to the besieging army. The siege dragged on, month after month. Under an incessant shower of stones, burning naphtha, and fiery darts, the glorious capital of Haroun al Rashid became a wilderness of smoking ruins. The dismantled streets were encumbered with putrifying corpses. Thousands of wretched people wandered about, homeless, shelterless, and in abject misery. "Was not Baghdad?" so writes a poet who was present in the city during this disastrous period—

"Was not Baghdad the fairest of cities, the most attractive sight that could be offered to fascinated eyes?

Aye, she was so; but her beauty is effaced; the will of destiny has converted her into a desert.

* * * * * *

Where are her gardens full of beauty, her mansions which adorned the river bank, in the midst of a prosperous country?

Where are those royal residences, which I have known sparkling like precious stones?

* * * * * *

The denizens of her harems are exposed to the public view, without veil or concealment.

They wander abroad affrighted, ignorant whither they go, and trembling like fugitive gazelles.

* * * * * *

The vengeance of God has descended upon his creatures to punish them for the crimes they have committed.

* * * * * *

Let us weep over the smoking ashes of our homes, over the corpses, and over our riches, and our property devoted to pillage!"

The siege had dragged on for fourteen months, before Emin made up his mind to relinquish the struggle. The issue of his former negociations had convinced him that from Tahir he could hope for neither pity nor clemency. He applied, therefore, on the present occasion, to Tahir's colleague, Hartama. That general, ignorant of Mamoun's orders to Tahir, and eager to appropriate the glory of receiving the surrender of the khalif, at once promised al Emin that his life should be held sacred. It was agreed between them, that on a fixed night—25th Mohurrum, A.H. 198—Hartama should come in a boat under the walls of the khalif's palace, and convey al Emin to his camp. The arrangement was to be kept secret from Tahir; the latter, however, received information of it, and determined to defeat the plan, and obtain himself possession of the person of al Emin.

The night agreed upon for the flight arrived. Emin took an affectionate leave of his two sons, as of those whom in this life he would never see again. Then mounting his horse, he proceeded to the river side. A single attendant accompanied him, with a lighted torch to show the path. They found the boat moored at the

appointed spot, and in it were Hartama and twenty of his followers. The Persian general received the fallen prince with a kiss on his forehead, and assisted him on board. His attendant then stepped in, and the boat was pushed out into the mid stream. Tahir, however, was close at hand. On the fall of night he had repaired to the river side; and there, in boats drawn close up to the bank, he had concealed a party of two hundred men, completely armed. Hartama's boat was no sooner seen in mid stream, than Tahir's followers also pushed out into the river, and began to hurl their lances at it. Hartama endeavoured to repulse the attack; but the assailants succeeeded in staving in the khalif's boat, which filled rapidly and sunk. All who could swim, leapt into the river and made for the shore. The first man to reach it was Ahmed ibn Sallam, the solitary attendant of al Emin. He was captured by a picket of Tahir's army, the leader of which was about to put him to death, when Ahmed averted his fate by a promise to give him a large sum of money if his life was spared.

"I was then," Ahmed goes on to say, "led into a very dark chamber. Shortly after I perceived a man enter. He was almost naked; he had on only a pair of drawers, a turban which covered his face, and a cloak flung over his shoulders. They shut him up with me, and departed, telling the people of the house to keep a good watch over us. As soon as the new comer entered, he drew aside the turban which concealed his features, and I recognized the khalif. I could not refrain from weeping, and I said gently to myself, 'We belong unto God, and to Him we return.' He looked at me attentively, and said, 'Are you one of ours?' 'Aye, my Lord, I am your freedman, Ahmed ibn Sallam.'"

The wretched prince entreated his follower to come

near him, for he was sore afraid. Ahmed bid him be of good cheer; his brother was a merciful prince, and in the case of a brother, would assuredly not act counter to his habitual disposition. "The voice of blood," he said, "will plead in your behalf." "Alas!" said the prince, "royalty has neither children nor bowels of compassion." Then they prayed together.

"We were occupied thus," continued Ahmed, "when the door o the chamber opened, and an armed man entered. He looked fixedly at Emin, and when he had fixed his features in his memory, he withdrew, drawing the bolt behind him. I recognized Muhammad the Tahiride, and no longer doubted that the death of Emin was determined on. I still had to recite the prayer set apart for the third part of the night. Fearing that I should be killed before completing it, I was about to commence when the prince again called me. 'Ahmed,' he said, 'do not remain far from me, for I am sore afraid.' I came close to him. A few seconds after, we heard the tramp of horses. Some one struck the door; it swung open; and gave admission to a party of Persians with drawn sabres in their hands. Emin perceiving them approach, rose and said, 'We belong unto God, and we return to Him. My soul is about to mount up to God. Whither shall I fly? How defend myself?' The assassins paused on the threshold of the chamber, hesitating to enter, and each endeavouring to thrust on the other. Emin snatched up a cushion, and shouted to them, 'I am the cousin of the Apostle of God! I am the son of Haroun, the brother of Mamoun, and God will call you to an account for the shedding of my blood!' One of the murderers then made at him, and cut him with a sabre on the crown of his head. Emin struck him in the face with the cushion; then flinging himself on him, tried to wrest the sabre from his grasp. The murderer set to shouting in Persian, 'He has killed me! he has killed me!' His companions ran up. One of them plunged his sword in the side of the prince; then they threw him down and killed him; and having cut off his head, they took it away to Tahir."

But Mamoun was still far from the goal of his wishes. The murder of his brother became the starting-point of an opposition more formidable than

any he had yet encountered. Mamoun, as I have said, was a mere tool in the hands of his Persian minister, Fadhl ibn Sahl. The counsels of this man had encouraged him to enter into a conflict with his brother. It was Fadhl who had selected Tahir as the leader of the host. And the verification of his prophecies, the signal success which had marked the development of his policy, had confirmed his influence over the mind of his master. Mamoun abandoned to him the entire control of the administration, in complete reliance upon his wisdom. And Fadhl used this power to fill every post with creatures of his own choosing. His brother, Hasan ibn Sahl, was made governor of Irak; and the other provinces, in like manner, were entrusted to the charge of Persians, some of whom openly scouted at Islam, whilst others were only recent converts. The conduct of these governors had the consequences which were to be expected. Very speedily Syria, Irak, and Arabia were in a flame. The House of Ali placed itself at the head of the movement. That House had neither forgotten nor forgiven the treacherous part played towards them by the early Abbasides. And under the khalifate of al Mansour, and again in the days of Hadi and Haroun, they had stirred up fierce revolts, which had placed in extreme peril the throne of the Abbasides. But never had they risen with so fair a hope of success as now. Hatred of the Persian domination rallied around their banners hundreds of tried warriors who, on former occasions, had fought against them. The policy of Fadhl ibn Sahl facilitated their success. Eager only to be supreme, and

jealous of all rivals, he had persuaded Mamoun to recall Hartama back to Khorasan, and to limit the authority of Tahir to the government of Baghdad. The Persian parasites who governed in the place of these able generals, proved to be utterly incapable to make head against the tempest which had overtaken them. The Alides were successful in a number of battles. All Irak was in their possession; their orders were obeyed throughout the Hejaz, Fars, and Yemen; and Baghdad was threatened with the horrors of a second siege, in which the recently victorious Persians would be in the position of the besieged. But the leaders of the insurrection speedily quenched the new-born enthusiasm for their cause by their reckless cruelty. They forgot the memorable example set them by the Prophet when he entered Mekka as a victor; and thought more of gratifying their hungry hate, and satiating their thirst for revenge, than of consolidating their power by a politic and beneficent clemency. In Yemen, the Alide leader obtained the designation of "Butcher," from the numbers he executed; in Irak, that of "The Incendiary," because of the fierceness with which he persecuted all who had ever been hostile to his party—burning their houses, and confiscating their property; and in Mekka the Alide leader, not content with the expulsion of all Abbasides resident there, seized and divided among his friends the gold embroidered curtain which covered the Kaaba, as well as the gold upon the pillars of the Mosque, and gave himself up to such shameful profligacy, that the people rose up and expelled him from the city. The consequence was that when Hartama, who

had been recalled in haste from Khorasan, reappeared upon the scene of his past exploits, he found little difficulty in quelling the insurrection. The people everywhere turned against the men who had so grievously oppressed them. The incendiary Zaid was seized by his own subjects and handed over to one of Mamoun's generals; and in the Hejaz and Yemen the people expelled the Alides, and resumed their allegiance to the House of Abbas.

The gallant Hartama was ill-rewarded for his services. He perceived that these revolts had been occasioned, not by enthusiasm for the House of Ali, but by the conduct of the agents of Mamoun's Persian vizier. He was anxious to hasten back to Khorasan in order to lay these facts before his master and persuade him to leave Merou, and, like his predecessors, establish the seat of government in Irak. Fadhl ibn Sahl divined, or was informed, of the purport of his coming; and urged upon the khalif the absolute necessity of keeping Hartama in the disturbed provinces, as the one man capable of quelling the seditious spirits that abounded there. This advice seemed sound; and Mamoun despatched an order to Hartama, forbidding his entry into the province of Khorasan. But Hartama, trusting to his great services, and anxious, above all things, to open the mind of Mamoun to the veritable character of the situation, disregarded the order, and continued his march to Merou. The crafty and unscrupulous Fadhl ibn Sahl eagerly availed himself of this seeming disobedience to ensure the ruin of a man whom he feared and hated. He declared Har-

tama to be a rebel, and the secret instigator of the revolt in Irak. This he could pretend, with a certain plausibility, because one of the chief men in that revolt had at one time been a highly-trusted officer of Hartama. Hartama's dread lest he should be seized and put to death by the vizier before he had obtained access to the khalif strengthened the presumption. In order to guard against this peril, and inform Mamoun of his arrival, he entered Merou to the sound of trumpets, and with all the pomp of a victorious leader. This, in a man who was acting in direct disobedience of orders, not unreasonably appeared to Mamoun an act of unpardonable audacity. It seemed to confirm what Fadhl ibn Sahl had alleged against him. In high wrath, he summoned his faithful general to his presence, and upbraided him as a traitor; he refused to let him speak in his own defence, and after permitting him to be brutally maltreated by the royal bodyguard, flung him into a dungeon, where, a few days after, he was murdered by Fadhl ibn Sahl. Such is the gratitude of kings.

The murder of Hartama was the signal for another rebellion in Irak. Tahir was absent in Syria. The troops in Baghdad, whom Hartama had commanded in so many victorious campaigns, broke out into mutiny. They paraded the streets, shouting, "We will not have this Hasan ibn Sahl, Magian that he is, and the son of a Magian, nor his brother, Fadhl ibn Sahl; and if Mamoun does not repudiate them, we will repudiate him." The prisons, as usual, were broken open, the governor chased away, the reign of law ceased, and

murder and abduction were again prosecuted in open day. Certainly, it requires a very profound belief in the doctrine of Fatality to render life endurable in a Muhammadan country. Fadhl ibn Sahl, however, succeeded in concealing from Mamoun the true cause of these troubles. He represented them as due to the restlessness of the Alides; and counselled Mamoun to win their party over to himself, by electing a member of the House of Ali as his successor to the khalifate. This advice Mamoun, after long deliberation, adopted.

There was living at that time one Ali ibn Mousa, a lineal descendant of the great khalif Ali, and venerated by the Shias as the true Imam of Islam. He was learned in the law, pious, zealous in well-doing; and, in short, a better selection could not have been made. Mamoun summoned him to Merou, gave him his daughter in marriage, struck the coin in his name, and even went so far as to exchange the black garments of the Abbasides for the green of the Alides. At the same time, circular letters were sent by the vizier to the governors of the different provinces, bidding them to announce to the people the change in the order of succession, and to take their oath of allegiance to Ali ibn Mousa. It was hoped by thus wedding together the two rival families, that the divisions in Islam might be healed. But the time had long passed since such an expedient could accomplish such results. It might have been possible when the first Abbaside khalif ascended the throne, for up to that time the two Houses had cordially co-operated together. The khalif Ali had no supporters better trusted, or abler, than Abdallah

ibn Abbas and his brothers; and the blood of the Abbasides had flowed freely in every abortive struggle of the Alides against their successful rivals, the Ommayas. The House of Ali might, then, moved by a sense of gratitude not less than self-interest, have consented to the partition of its claims with the descendant of Ibn Abbas. But instead of this, they had found themselves first deceived, and then cruelly persecuted. The harshness and suspicions of the khalif al Mansour had forced them to revolt, and these revolts had been suppressed with terrible severity. Men venerated by the Shias as incarnations of a divine life, had expiated the crime of their origin by cruel deaths, or long captivity in the dungeons of the Abbasides. The Alides, during their brief moments of supremacy, had retaliated upon their opponents with a ferocity equal to their own. To bridge over the river of blood which flowed between the two factions was a work beyond the capacity of man. The Abbasides knew this full well. They possessed the supremacy, and were not prepared to relinquish it for the chimerical projects of an indolent dreamer like the young khalif.

Baghdad was the chief seat of the family of Abbas. Together with their clients and slaves, they numbered thirty-three thousand men; and their influence was supreme over many thousands not related to them by either family or adoptive relations. No sooner was the circular letter of vizier Fadhl ibn Sahl known in Baghdad, than the Abbasides rose up as one man to protest against it. The streets of the city were swarming with an angry crowd. The soldiery frater-

nized with the citizens. They cursed Mamoun as the son of an adulteress. It was impossible, they affirmed, that a true Abbaside would act thus. The man was, in heart at least, a Magian; and this was another intrigue of that arch Magian, Fadhl ibn Sahl, to reduce the Arabs to servitude. And so they went about the city, shouting and cursing, their wrath waxing continually hotter, till a cry began, and passed from street to street, that Mamoun was deposed, and a new khalif must be elected in his place. A week elapsed in stormy and fruitless discussions. But at last choice was made of the celebrated singer and musician, Ibrahim, the son of the khalif Mehdi. (5th Mohurrum, A.H. 202; A.D. 817.)

Even this event did not have the effect of awakening Mamoun from his lethargy. Fadhl ibn Sahl persuaded him into the belief that Ibrahim ibn Mehdi was not a rival khalif, but acting simply as his lieutenant in Irak. For nearly two years, Ibrahim succeeded in retaining his seat upon his precarious throne. It was a period of terrible suffering for Irak. The perpetual disorders produced their inevitable consequences. There was no security for life or property. The peasants abandoned their homesteads, and vast tracts of land, deprived of their inhabitants, produced no harvest. Famine came on the heels of war; and pestilence followed hard upon famine. A period was put to this season of misery by an act of self-sacrifice on the part of the successor-designate to the throne of Mamoun. Ali ibn Mousa requested a private interview with the khalif. He then unfolded to him the veritable cause of the troubles in

Irak. That was not, as Fadhl ibn Sahl pretended, devotion to the House of Ali, but aversion to it. The Abbasides dreaded the accession of an Alide to power, as involving the subversion of Arab supremacy, and the commencement of a bloody revenge for all the blood shed of the House of Ali since the khalif as Saffah had ascended the throne. It was not true that Ibrahim ibn Mehdi was acting as the lieutenant of Mamoun in Baghdad; he had been elected as khalif in his own right. If Mamoun wished to preserve his throne, he must without delay proceed to Irak. Mamoun was aghast at the astounding revelation. "Are you alone aware of it?" he asked. "The whole army knows it," was the response. Mamoun sent secretly for his chief officers. From them he learned all—the murder of the gallant Hartama under a false charge of treason, the removal of Tahir to Syria, the choice of Ali ibn Mousa as his successor, were all so many moves in a deep political enterprise of his vizier. The scales fell from his eyes. Nevertheless, he was not in a position at once to rid himself of his dangerous favourite. Fadhl's brother, Hasan, commanded in Irak an army chiefly raised in Khorasan. If Mamoun struck openly at Fadhl, Hasan would, in all probability, pass, with all his troops, into the service of Ibrahim ibn Mehdi, as the only way open for securing his own safety. He was compelled, therefore, to have recourse to secret assassination. The whole procedure is an instructive illustration of the weakness of despotism.

The khalif quitted Merou, 10th Rejeb, A.H. 203.

He arrived at Sarakhs at the commencement of the month Shaban. There he summoned to a secret interview four soldiers, with whose reckless and ferocious character he was acquainted, and imposed upon them the duty of murdering the vizier. He made choice of these men, because, as soon as the crime was accomplished, he had resolved to disown it, and put his instruments to death; and their execution, on account of their evil repute, would occasion neither indignation nor disorder in the ranks of his army. The instructions given to the four murderers were, that they were to keep a watch over Fadhl ibn Sahl, and when he entered his bath, rush in and slay him.

On the morrow after this interview, the vizier repaired at the customary hour to his bath. He was an astrologer, and when casting his horoscope had learned that on that day his blood was to be shed between water and fire. He was at first affrighted, but, on reflection, drew comfort from the fact that water and fire were to be found together only in a bath. He accordingly had himself bled; and this blood being collected in a vessel, was poured into the bath. The vizier then entered the bath with an untroubled mind; but as he was coming out, the assassins rushed upon him and slew him. They then fled, and concealed themselves. When the khalif was informed of the tragic event, he affected to be overwhelmed with grief. He ran to the bath, and on beholding the inanimate corpse of the vizier, wept abundantly, and wrung his hands in an agony of sorrow. The minister was interred with magnificence; the entire court went into

mourning for seven days; and a large reward was offered to any one giving such information as would lead to the apprehension of the murderers. The duplicity of the khalif was, in truth, without limits. A special envoy was at once sent off to Irak, to break the sad news to Hasan, the brother of the murdered man. This messenger was charged to make known the profound sorrow of the khalif at this untoward event, to confer upon Hasan the official position held by his late brother, and to demand for Mamoun the hand of his daughter Buran in marriage. The khalif then paid a visit of condolence to the mother whom he had just bereaved of a son. "Grieve not for him," said the tender-hearted prince, "neither be afflicted at his loss, for God has given thee a son in me to replace him; so you need not conceal from me the sentiments which you used to confide to him." To crown all, in the month Ramadan, the wretched murderers were themselves discovered, and the khalif ordered them to be slain in his presence. "I cannot," said the pious man, "in this sacred month of Ramadan, accomplish a more meritorious work than executing upon them the sentence of God." When the men found they were about to be put to death, they began to clamour for mercy, protesting that they had but obeyed the orders of the khalif. Mamoun rebuked them with the dignified severity of conscious innocence. "I thought you would say that; but all the world knows that Fadhl was as my arm or my foot, and no one would cut off his arm or his foot. Now, even though I might have shown you mercy, I will show none, because of the falsehood

you have uttered." And the men were immediately put to death.

But Mamoun's career of murder and duplicity was as yet far from finished. He had rid himself of his vizier, and disarmed the suspicions of his brother. But he had done nothing to appease the wrath of the population of Baghdad, and the Arabs of Irak. Ibrahim ibn Mehdi was still prayed for as khalif in the mosques of the capital. An Alide was still Mamoun's designated successor, and a Persian his chief minister. At this juncture, Ali ibn Mousa most opportunely died—poisoned, as was generally suspected, Mamoun went through the same performance as upon the occasion of the death of his vizier. He wept over the corpse abundantly; he presided in person at the interment; he buried the deceased Imam beside the khalif Haroun al Rashid, and erected a mausoleum over his remains. Shortly after Hasan ibn Sahl went mad, and had to be confined. This was due to a drug secretly administered to him by the order of the khalif.

Daylight began to break in upon the long night of storm and darkness. The fall of these three men paved the way for Mamoun's reconciliation with his Arab subjects without exposing him to the anger of his Persian allies. And meanwhile he was advancing by easy stages towards Baghdad. The towns and villages along the line of march were rejoiced by liberal remissions of revenue and large reductions of taxation. His progress was like that of some beneficent divinity, who showers down gifts as he passes from land to land. His secret emissaries meanwhile had penetrated to

Baghdad, and assured the chief men of the city of a complete amnesty and pardon of the past if they would abandon Ibrahim and return to their allegiance. This they were not loth to do. They had espoused his cause merely to avert the impending danger of a Persian ascendancy. That danger no longer seemed to threaten; and Ibrahim, without money or resources, and a mere handful of beaten troops, was not in a position to make head against his nephew. And so it came to pass, that at Nahrewan, Mamoun was met by all the members of his family, the leaders of the soldiery, and the chief men of Baghdad, and saluted as khalif. He laid aside the green garments of the Alides, and resumed the black of the Abbasides; and on the 14th Safar, A.H. 204, made his triumphal entry into what remained of Baghdad. Ibrahim ibn Mehdi escaped, disguised as a woman; and Fadhl ibn Rabia was pardoned, and allowed to live unmolested in the capital.

# CHAPTER IV.

## THE KORANIC CONTROVERSY.

### A.D. 819—952.

MAMOUN was now sole khalif of Asiatic Islam. Like all Oriental despots, he had sacrificed friends and convictions with equal indifference, for the sake of acquiring power. "A king," was one of his sayings, "may pardon everything, except an attack upon his authority, the revealing of his secrets, and an outrage done to his harem." Consistently with this principle, he had, without compunction, put to death his chivalrous general, Hartama, treacherously murdered his minister, and poisoned a man to whom he was so deeply indebted as the Alide Ali ibn Mousa. To conciliate the unruly Arabs of Irak, he had feigned to break with his Persian supporters, and affected a zeal for orthodoxy which he was far from feeling. But he was no sooner firmly established in Baghdad, than he threw off the mask, and revealed the true bent of his character. Hasan ibn Sahl was released from durance and installed in the office of vizier. The provinces of the empire were handed over to the care of Persian satraps. Persians, Christians and Jews filled the subordinate posts in the administration; and, as it were to commemorate the commencement of

a new epoch with becoming emphasis, the marriage of the khalif with Buran, the daughter of the vizier Hasan ibn Sahl, was solemnized with extraordinary magnificence.

The expenses were defrayed by the father of the bride. The festivities and rejoicings extended over a period of nineteen days; and nothing approaching to them had been witnessed for ages before. The whole vast retinue of the khalif, down even to the camel-drivers, the boatmen, and the animals, were the guests of the vizier. Balls of musk were showered down upon the Abbasides, the commanders of the troops, the *khatibs*, and those who held eminent rank at court. Each of these balls contained a ticket, on which was inscribed the name of a landed property, or of a slave girl, or of a set of horses, or some other valuable thing. The persons into whose hands they fell proceeded to an agent specially appointed for the purpose, from whom they received the gifts specified upon their tickets. Balls of musk, gold and silver coins, and eggs of amber, were thrown in showers among the rest of the people. At the marriage ceremony, a mat interwoven with gold was spread out for the khalif, who stood on it, whilst pearls in abundance were showered down at his feet. Watching them as they fell and dancing before him, Mamoun said, "God be merciful to Abou Nuwas! One would think that he had seen this, when he described the bubbles which cover the surface of wine when mixed with water."

> "Bubbles, the small and the great—Behold!
> A gravel of pearls on a ground of gold."

The nuptial chamber was illuminated by a candle of ambergris, weighing eighty pounds, and standing in a candlestick of pure gold; and when the khalif seated himself beside his bride, a thousand pearls were showered upon them from a golden tray.

This magnificent marriage ceremony, which took place six years after Mamoun's entry into Baghdad, marked the complete establishment of Persian ascendancy in Irak. Mamoun's religious convictions are apparent from a significant anecdote that is recorded of him. Among the embassies which arrived at Baghdad, was one from Kabul, which brought, with other costly presents, a book written in the old Persian language, and entitled, "The Eternal Reason." The title denotes the character of the book. It was an endeavour to build up a religious creed having its foundation in the human reason and conscience. These, according to the writer, were eternal and the same in all men, and no religion, therefore, could pretend to universality which depended upon any other testimony. The vizier affirmed it to be the best work ever written in the old Persian tongue, and, under his supervision, it was partly translated into Arabic. When the khalif read it he was deeply moved. "Here," he exclaimed, "is the true wisdom; that with which we Moslems busy ourselves is only a wagging of the tongue in the mouth." To inquire into and develop this "religion of the reason," became henceforth one great aim of his life. Conferences of learned men were held in the presence of the khalif, at which the freest discussion was permitted and practised. These conferences are

thus described by an amazed and scandalized believer :—

"At the first meeting I attended, not only were there present Moslems of every sect, orthodox and heterodox, but misbelievers, fireworshippers, materialists, atheists, Jews, Christians; in a word, sceptics of every kind. Each sect had its own chief charged to defend the opinions it professed; and every time that one of these chiefs entered the hall, all present arose in sign of respect, and not a man resumed his seat until the new comer had taken his. The hall was soon filled, and when the assembly was complete, one of the unbelievers spoke as follows:—'We are,' said he, 'assembled here together for the purpose of discussion. You all understand the conditions; you Moslems are not to meet us with reasons taken from your Book, or founded on the authority of your Prophet; as we believe neither in the one nor in the other. Everyone is to limit himself to arguments based upon that reason which is the same in all.' Every one applauded these words. You can imagine," adds the teller of this story, "that having heard such things, I did not remain in that assembly."

There can be little doubt that the khalif and his most intimate friends desired a complete subversion of Islam, in favour of this "religion of the reason." The difficulty was to know where and how to begin. Islam, as I have already observed, being both a religious creed and a political system, involved in its subversion nothing less than a complete remodelling of the social system. This was manifestly impossible. The change must be effected gradually if it was to be effected at all. The Moslem must be detached by imperceptible gradations from his traditional beliefs; any attempt to tear them forcibly asunder would bring ruin upon those who were rash enough to try. Success was possible only by planting in the minds of the Faithful the germ of a conviction, which, as it grew and

strengthened, would cause them spontaneously to reject the fundamental tenet of Muhammad's creed. That tenet, as I have repeatedly pointed out, is that man, as man, neither possesses any capacity for the discovery of truth, nor any inner light whereby to separate truth from falsehood. In this tenet is embodied both the strength and the weakness of Islam. It crushes thought, speculation, and inquiry, and so kills scepticism; but it also effectually bars all progress by the conversion of unreasoning bigotry into a second nature.

The task which the khalif and his friends set themselves to do, was to remove this hard, insensible crust, and give light and air to the living mind beneath it. The leader of this enterprise was the kadi Ahmed ibn Abi Douad. He had, when young, been a pupil and disciple of Wasil ibn Ata, the first of the Rationalists; and himself, a poet, orator, metaphysician, and theologian, he was also a warm advocate of free thought. He was a generous patron of men of letters, taking a great number of them under his care, treating them as members of his family, and providing for all their wants. His conversation, his manners and appearance were so admirable an expression of the mind within, that it was said of him that he was "all soul;" and the khalif Mamoun deemed none of his intellectual gatherings to be complete or enjoyable where the kadi was not present. Acting under his advice, the khalif resolved to lay siege to the fortress of orthodoxy by attacking the orthodox belief regarding the nature of the Koran. That belief was, that the Koran was the

eternal uncreated Word of God, existing, as some later divines have put it, in the very essence of the Deity. But at this time the opinion was a speculation, not a formal dogma, and it was combated by the Free-thinkers, who affirmed the Koran to be created, and the composition of Muhammad. By this affirmation they did not deny the Prophetic mission of Muhammad, nor the truth of the Koran; they simply meant to insist, that as in the case of preceding prophets, his revelations had come to Muhammad in the form of ideas, which he had subsequently clothed in language of his own composition. It is unnecessary to point out the incalculable consequences involved in this distinction. It brought the Sacred Book of Islam within the reach of human criticism; it placed Muhammad on a level with Abraham, Moses, and Jesus; and the Church of Islam ceased at once to be the one spot upon earth lit by the light from heaven, while all beyond it lay immersed in darkness.

This opinion was now openly espoused by the khalif. In the year 212 he issued a *fatwa*, or decree, declaring that those who asserted the Koran to be eternal and uncreated, were guilty of heresy. Had an Omar ibn Abd al Aziz put forth this decree, it might have established a footing in the hearts of the Faithful. None would have supposed that he desired to sully the purity of Islam. With Mamoun it was different. Jews, Christians, and Magians were the men whom most he delighted to honour. A profane literature, that knew nothing of Islam, was the favourite subject of his study and his conversation. Nor was this laxity of mind

atoned for by any severity of morals; and the Faithful, having regard to the revels and wine-bibbing, of which his palace was the theatre, might with reason indignantly repel his pretensions as a religious reformer. The chief kadi of the Court, Yahya ibn Aktham, was a man notorious through all Irak for the obscenity of his conversation and the loathsome character of his vices. Abou Nuwas, the favourite Court poet, was a scoffer at religion and a man of dissolute life. "Multiply thy sins to the utmost," he had said in one of his poems; "for thou art to meet an indulgent Lord. When thou comest before Him . . . . thou wilt gnaw thy hands with regret for the pleasures which you avoided through fear of hell." An extreme licence of manners prevailed in Baghdad. The very Mosques, according to Abou Nuwas, were "rat-traps set by Satan," which caught men. They were places of assignation. "Gazelles," and nameless persons of the male sex, haunted their purlieus, and diverted the Faithful from the rites of prayer down the broad path which led to destruction. The khalif, on the authority of a doubtful Tradition, had gone so far as to attempt to consecrate immorality by the issue of an order declaring temporary marriages to be legal and proper. But the general indignation excited by this *fatwa* was so great that even the licentious Yahya ibn Aktham urged Mamoun to cancel it—a suggestion which was acted upon by the khalif.*

* Muhammad ibn Mansur relates as follows:—"We were with al Mamoun on our way to Syria, when he ordered a proclamation to

An innovation in doctrine proceeding from a Court like that of the khalif Mamoun could not fail to arouse anger and suspicion. It evoked a tendency of mind

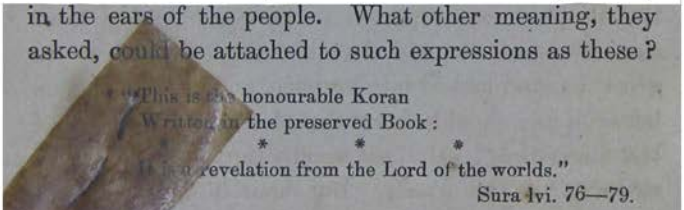
be made declaring *metâ* (temporary) marriages to be lawful. On this, Yahya ibn Aktham said to me and Abou'l Aina, 'To-morrow morning, early, go both of you to him, and if you find an opportunity of speaking, do so; if not, remain silent till I go in.' We went there, and found him with a toothpick in his hand, and exclaiming, in a violent passion, 'Two *metâs* occurred in the time of the Prophet of God and in that of Abou Bakr; and shall I forbid the practice? Who are you, vile scarabee! to dare to forbid me to follow that which was practised by the Prophet of God and by Abou Bakr?' On this, Abou'l Aina made me a sign, and said, 'Muhammad ibn Mansur! that is a man who is capable of attributing to Omar ibn al Khaltab what he has just said; how can we speak to him?' So we held our peace. Yahya ibn Aktham then came in and sat down. We sat down also, and Mamoun said to him, 'Why do I see you look so troubled?' Yahya answered, 'Commander of the Faithful! it is with grief for a novelty introduced into Islamism.' 'What novelty?' said the khalif. Yahya replied, 'A proclamation has been made declaring *metâ* marriages lawful, declaring fornication lawful.' 'Fornication!' exclaimed Mamoun. 'Yes, *metâ* is fornication.' 'On what authority do you say so?' 'On that of the book of Almighty God, and of a declaration made by His Prophet. God said, "*Now are the true Believers happy,*" and so forth, to the words, "*and those who keep themselves from carnal knowledge of any except their wives, or the slaves whom their right hands possess; and whoso coveteth any* (woman) *beyond these, they are transgressors.*" Commander of the Faithful! a *metâ* wife, is she a woman possessed by the right hand?' The khalif answered, 'No.' 'Is she a wife who can inherit, and be inherited of lawfully in the sight of God? a wife bearing legitimate children? one whose marriage is regulated by lawful conditions?' The khalif answered, 'No.' 'Then,' replied Yahya, 'whoever passes these two limits is a transgressor. Commander of the Faithful! there is az Zuhri, who related, on the authority of Abd Allah and al Hasan, the sons of Muhammad ibn al Hanafiya, that they heard their father declare, that he heard Ali ibn Ali Talib say, "*The Prophet ordered me to proclaim that* metâ *marriages were forbidden and unlawful after he had authorised them.*"' Al Mamoun then turned towards us and

the very opposite of that which the promulgators of the new decree had desired and expected. The belief in the eternity of the Koran passed at once from the region of speculation into that of positive dogma. The heretics having ventured to assail it, it was immediately elevated into one of the main pillars of Islam. All endeavours to draw a distinction between the Word as existing in the Divine Mind, and the same Word reduced to writing and contained in a book, were rejected as dangerous. The Koran was to be regarded as the Word of God in the plainest and most literal sense. Not only the words themselves, but the pronunciation of them, as handed down by tradition from the Prophet, were to be received as eternal and uncreated; and no devotion to Islam—not the labours of a life expended in the collection of the records of the faith—sufficed to preserve from the stigma of infidelity those who were unsound on this single tenet. Thus, we are told that the two eminent Traditionists, al Bokhari and Muslim ibn al Hajjaj, held that the pronunciation of the Koran, being effected by the organs of speech, is created, because it is an act of God's creatures, and cannot, therefore, be uncreated and eternal. They were, at the time, residing at Naisapore, and these opinions gave such grievous offence to Muhammad ibn Yahya, the leading doctor

said, 'Is it ascertained that this Tradition came from az Zuhri?' We replied, 'It is, Commander of the Faithful! a number of Traditionists have related it, such as Malek, to whom God be gracious!' On hearing this, he exclaimed, 'God forgive me! proclaim that *metâ* marriages are forbidden!' And a proclamation to that effect was immediately made." (*Ibn. Khall.*, vol. iv. p. 36.)

of that city, that he issued a *fatwa* forbidding the people to attend the lectures of al Bokhari. So bitter became the feeling among the people, that the learned Traditionist was compelled to retire from the city to a village at some distance, and every person avoided him except Muslim, who continued his visits as before. This greatly enraged Muhammad ibn Yahya; and one day, at the close of his lessons, he said to those who attended them, "Whoever holds the pronunciation of the Koran to be created, I forbid that person to attend my lessons." Muslim, who was present, immediately passed his cloak over his turban, and standing up in the midst of the assembly, left the room. Having then collected all the notes which he had taken at Muhammad's lessons, he loaded some porters with them, and sent them to his door.

The theological war raged fiercely. The Free-thinkers stigmatized as Polytheists those who maintained the eternity of the Koran, because this doctrine involved the existence of two eternal beings, God and the Koran. The orthodox retorted by adducing passages from the Koran, which showed, according to them, that when the Prophet spoke of the "Word of God," he meant that which was contained within the two boards of a book, and which was read every Friday in the ears of the people. What other meaning, they asked, could be attached to such expressions as these?



"This is the honourable Koran
Written in the preserved Book:
* * *
It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds."
Sura lvi. 76—79.

"Verily, We have caused it to descend in the night of Power."
Sura xcvii. 3.

"The month Ramadan, in which the Koran was sent down to be man's guidance, and an explanation of that guidance."
Sura ii. 181.

This conviction, moreover, was affirmed on the authority of the Traditions. In one of these, the Prophet was declared to have said, "God wrote the *Thora* with His own hand; and with His own hand He created Adam; and also in the Koran it is written, '*And we wrote for him upon the tables a monition concerning every matter*,' in reference to the tables of the Law given to Moses." A Tradition such as this showed that God possessed hands, that He wrote and performed other operations with them; and if He had done so in the case of the revelations entrusted to Moses and inferior prophets, it was impious, and obviously false, to deny a like origin to the revelation granted to the last and greatest of the Prophets. This position involved the tangibility and visibility of the Deity. The Free-thinkers denounced this as blasphemous. Forthwith anthropomorphism of the wildest kind became identified with sincere and genuine belief in Islam. God, it was affirmed, had a body and limbs. This, as usual, was supported by a Tradition, in which the Prophet was reported to have said, "My Lord came to meet me, and stretched forth His hands to greet me, and looked into my face, and laid His hands between my shoulders, so that I felt the coolness of His finger-tips." God sat upon a throne, in the literal meaning of the words. But here difficulties arose,

which it was found impossible to solve satisfactorily. Did He fill the whole of the throne, or only a part of it? Was it possible to walk round the throne, and get behind the Deity? Did His attribute of infinity extend infinitely upwards, or infinitely downwards? Was there a space between Him and the throne; and if so, how much?—some inclining to believe it was infinite, and others immeasurably minute. Was He "firmly" seated upon the throne, or in some other manner?

The khalif, meanwhile, had recourse to the methods which despotic sovereigns generally adopt for the conversion of their subjects. As the orthodox party declined to acknowledge voluntarily that the Koran was created, they must be compelled to do so. A Court of Inquisition was established, having as its President the kadi Ahmed ibn Abi Douad. Its duties were to arrest all eminent divines who differed in opinion from the khalif, and by beatings and imprisonment induce them to admit that the Koran was created. This tribunal continued its operations through the remainder of the reign of Mamoun, and that of his successors, Mutasim and Wathik. Mutasim was fond of engaging personally in disputation, and if worsted in argument, cutting the matter short by decapitating his opponent. The persecution fell almost entirely on the Hanbalites and the Shafites. Among the first to be cited before the Inquisition was the Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, and another eminent theologian named Muhammad ibn Nuh. On their refusing to allow the Koran to be created, they were sent to Tarsus for punishment, Mamoun being at the time resident there. His sudden

death delivered them for the moment; but in the year 219 the Imam was again cited before the tribunal, and remaining constant to his former confession of faith, he received twenty-eight strokes of a whip, and was flung into prison.

On the death of Mutasim, the orthodox party, under the guidance of Ahmed ibn Nasr, a learned divine, formed a plot to set aside his successor, Wathik, and establish on the throne a khalif of their way of thinking. The plot, however, failed, and Ahmed was arrested. Sufficient evidence was not forthcoming to obtain his conviction as a political traitor; but he was put to death as a heretic who denied the creation of the Koran, and asserted that in Paradise the Believers would *see* God. This abortive conspiracy gave an additional impulse to the zeal of the khalif. In Irak and Egypt the persecution was fiercest. Great numbers of divines were dragged from their homes, and, heavily fettered, brought before the tribunal at Baghdad. They bore these sufferings with admirable fortitude; and despite of tortures, beatings, and years of hopeless imprisonment, stoutly maintained that the Koran was the uncreated and eternal Word of God.

Next to the Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, the most eminent of these martyrs was a disciple of as Shafi, of the name of Abou Yakoub Yusuf, and known as "al Buwaiti," from Buwait, the name of the village in which he was born. He was one of a select company of four men whom as Shafi regarded as the most eminent of his disciples. The other three were al Muzani, Ibn Abd al Hukm, and Rabi ibn Sulaiman.

All four were present with their master in his last illness. The approach of death, according to the Muhammadan belief, often gives to the dying man the capacity to see into the future, as into a transparent a mirror. This privilege could hardly have been denied to so eminent a saint as as Shafi; and as the great Imam lay upon his death-bed, he fixed his eyes upon his four disciples, and uttered this prophecy concerning them—"As for thee, Abou Yakoub, thou shalt die in chains; thou, O Muhammad! (*Ibn Abd al Hukm*) will pass over to the sect of Malek; thou, Muzani, shall meet with various adventures in Egypt, and shalt make the time be remembered in which thou wert the ablest reasoner of the age; and thou, O Rabi, shalt be the most useful of all, in propagating the knowledge of the works which I have composed." All this came to pass. Al Muzani became the Imam of the Shafites from his acquaintance with the legal system and juridical decisions of their founder, and his knowledge of the Traditions which he transmitted on the authority of his master. He composed a great number of works, the most important of which is entitled "The Abridgement." This work has ever since been the basis of all the treatises composed on as Shafi's doctrines. Ar Rabî became the special Traditionist of the words and works of as Shafi; and through him most of the works composed by that Imam were handed down by oral dictation. He lived to be the last of the auditors of as Shafi. Ibn Abd. al Hukm returned to the Malekite sect, to which he had in early life belonged. The story of al Buwaiti has still to be told.

In obedience to the last commands of his master, al Buwaiti was established as teacher of as Shafi's class. He was a man remarkable for piety, devotion, and self-mortification. "No matter," said a neighbour, "at what hour I woke during the night, I was always sure to hear al Buwaiti reciting the Koran or saying his prayers." His eminence as a jurisconsult and his pronounced orthodoxy inevitably led to his being singled out as a fit subject of persecution. He was arrested, and carried as a prisoner from Kairo to Baghdad. His old class-fellow, Rabi ibn Sulaiman, beheld him as he was led off a prisoner. "I saw," he says, "al Buwaiti mounted on a mule; round his neck was a wooden collar; on his legs were fetters; from these to the collar extended an iron chain, to which was attached a clog weighing fifty pounds. Whilst they led him on, he continued repeating these words—'Almighty God created the world by means of the word *Be!* * Now, if that word was created, one created thing would have created another. By Allah! I shall willingly die in chains, for after me will be people who shall learn that, on account of this affair, some men died in chains. Were I brought before that man'—meaning Wathik—'I should declare unto him the truth.'"

On arriving at Baghdad, al Buwaiti refused to make the declaration required of him, repeating con-

* The reference in this speech is to the following verse of the Koran—"*Verily our speech unto a thing when we will the same, is, that we only say unto it, 'Be,' and it is.*" This was one of the arguments adduced by the orthodox to prove the eternity of the Koran considered as the Word of God.

tinually, "It is the Word of God, His uncreated Word." Heavily fettered as he was, he was immediately thrown into prison, where he remained till his death. But the fervour of his faith carried him with a sort of joy through all his trials. "There are," he says, in a letter to his above-mentioned class-mate, "certain moments in which I do not perceive that I have chains on my body, till I happen to touch them with my hand." Every Friday morning, when the voice of the *Muezzin* calling the people to prayer penetrated his narrow cell, he would wash, dress, and go to the door of his prison. The jailer would then say to him, "Where are you going?" and he would reply, "I answer him who calls in the name of the Lord." To this the jailer would say, "Back! God will pardon you!" Then the prisoner would retire, exclaiming, "Almighty God! you perceive that I answered the call of your herald, and that I was prevented from obeying." Al Buwaiti died in prison and in chains on a Friday morning of the month Rejeb, A.H. 231 (A.D. 846).

Towards the close of Wathik's khalifate, the persecution ceased. A prisoner convinced the khalif, if not that his doctrine was wrong, at least that he was not justified in forcing it upon the Faithful. This man was an old doctor, well versed in jurisprudence and the Traditions, who resided at Adanak, on the Syrian frontier. He was a man of commanding stature and venerable aspect; and as he was ushered into the presence of the khalif, heavily chained, but with an undaunted air, an expression of sympathy passed over

the face of Wathik. The old man asked permission to address a few questions to the kadi Ahmed ibn Abi Douad, who was present. Sanction being given, the following dialogue took place :—"Ahmed," said the old man, "what is this dogma which you desire to have established?" "That the Koran is created," replied Ahmed. "This dogma, then, is without doubt an essential part of the religion, insomuch that the latter cannot without it be said to be complete?" "Certainly." "Has the Apostle of God taught this to men, or has he left them free?" "He has left them free." "Was the Apostle of God acquainted with this dogma or not?" "He was acquainted with it." "Wherefore, then, do you desire to impose a belief regarding which the Apostle of God has left men free to think as they please?" Ahmed knew not what to say; and the old man, turning to Wathik, said, "Prince of Believers, here is my first position made good." Then, after a short interval, the old man, turning once more to the kadi, spake as follows:— "In the fifth verse of the fifth Sura, God has said, '*This day have I perfected religion for you, and have filled up the measures of my favours upon you; and it is my pleasure that Islam be your religion.*' But according to you, Islam is not perfected unless we adopt this doctrine that the Koran is created. Which now is most worthy of credence—God, when He declares Islam to be complete and perfect, or you when you announce the contrary?" Ahmed knew not what to say. "Prince of Believers," said the old doctor, "there is my second point made good."

Then turning once more to the embarrassed kadi, he resumed, "Ahmed, how do you explain the following words of God in His holy Book?—'*O Apostle! proclaim all that hath been sent down to thee from thy Lord; for if thou do it not, thou hast not proclaimed His message at all.*' Now this doctrine that you desire to spread among the Faithful, has the Apostle taught it, or has he abstained from doing so?" No answer. "Prince of Believers!" continued the old man, "such is my third argument." Then turning once more to the kadi, he said, "If the Prophet was acquainted with this doctrine which you desire to impose upon us, had he the right to pass it by in silence?" "He had the right." "And did the same right appertain to Abou Bekr, Omar, Othman, and Ali?" "It did." "Prince of Believers!" said the old man, "God will, in truth, be severe upon us, if He deprives us of a liberty which He accorded to the Prophet and his Companions." "It is true," said the khalif, "God cannot, without injustice, refuse that to us which He has granted to the Prophet and his Companions." And immediately he gave orders that his fetters should be struck off; but the old man refused to part with them. "When dying," he said, "I have directed that these chains should be placed between my shroud and my body; so that when I come to appear before my Lord, I may say, 'Lord! inquire from this man wherefore he has chained me unjustly, and wherefore, by thus treating me, he has brought terror to my family?'" At these words, Wathik and all present were moved to tears. "Old man," said the

khalif, "forgive me." "Sire," he replied, "before I left my house, I had forgiven you, out of my respect for the Prophet, and your kinship to him." The aged confessor declined the proffered liberalities of the khalif, requesting only to be permitted to return home in peace.

Thus ended the endeavour to convert Islam into a reasonable creed. It failed, partly because the Rationalists were obliged to base their doctrines upon a foundation incapable of supporting them. The circumstances of their day compelled them to appeal to the Koran for the justification of tenets which had been learned in the school of Aristotle; and this appeal, as we have just seen, it was impossible to make good in argument. But their chief cause of failure was, that they were not reformers, either religious or political, in the true sense of the word. They had no gospel to preach to mankind. They desired to subvert Islam; but to subvert it only as a speculative theology, not in its practical results. These—such as despotism, polygamy, concubinage, slavery—they never attempted, nor even intended, to denounce.

Nevertheless, weak and imperfect as the movement was, it marks the most brilliant period in the history of Islam. The transient glories of Baghdad are coincident with this period. An almost complete religious toleration prevailed; political disabilities had ceased to exist; and Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians shared with the Faithful the emoluments and responsibilities of public life. The khalifs invited to their Court the eminent scholars of the Byzantine Empire; and men

applied themselves with eager diligence to the study of philosophy, medicine, physics, astronomy, so far as these sciences were known to the Greeks. The effects of this free life and intellectual activity are striking enough; but to credit them to the inspiring influence of Islam is absurd. Islam, during this brief period, was virtually set aside; and when it regained its ascendancy, the greatness and prosperity of the Abbasides withered like a flower severed from its root.

The khalif Wathik died A.H. 232 (A.D. 847). The chiefs of the Turkish bodyguard placed his brother Jaafar upon the throne, who assumed the title of "al Mutawakhil" (*he who relies upon God*). Al Mutawakhil was an extravagant, ferocious, and tipsy sovereign, delighting in acts of cruelty, spending his time in the society of buffoons and jesters, and crushing the people with exactions in order to gratify his mania for building. His reign was a season of constant insurrection, misery, and turmoil. But by Moslem historians it is depicted as a golden age; and the reason of this is not hard to find. Al Mutawakhil restored the law of Islam to its proper supremacy. He persecuted with equal and unsparing hand Jews, Christians, Shias, Free-thinkers, and Fire-worshippers. Raised to the throne by the officers of the Turkish bodyguard, the khalif discerned that the power which made him sovereign might at any moment unmake him, unless he could find support elsewhere. He had the sagacity to see that in the religious bigotry of the people the support he needed would most easily be found. Rationalism in Islam was, as I have frequently said, merely an

intellectual pastime of the schools. It meditated no change in the order and constitution of society. Consequently the popular mind had remained wholly unaffected by it. All that the people understood was, that an extortionate and profligate Court was busy persecuting holy and devout men for the veneration in which they held the blessed Koran. When, therefore, al Mutawakhil, shortly after his succession, issued a *fatwa*, declaring that to assert the creation of the Koran was to assert a damnable falsehood, the satisfaction of the people was great. This measure the khalif followed up by inviting to the royal residence the leading theologians of the orthodox party, loading them with presents, and charging them, in their lectures and conversation, to lose no opportunity of confounding the Free-thinkers, and refuting their impious opinions. Then came ordinances directed against Jews and Christians.

Ever since the accession of the Abbasides to power, Jews and Christians had acquired a large and increasing power in the state. The khalif al Mansour had made use of them to keep a vigilant watch over such of the Ommayas as had escaped from the massacres perpetrated by his brothers, and to report the movements of the adherents of the fallen house. They were entrusted with the collection of the land-tax, and other executive duties, and doubtless availed themselves of the power they enjoyed, to retaliate on the Moslems some of the contempt and oppression which in former days the latter had inflicted upon them. At any rate, the Moslems were loud in their complaints of

the intolerable wrongs they endured, and deputed Shabib ibn Shahba, an eloquent and devout man, to intercede for them at the foot of the throne. "O, Prince of Believers!" said Shabib in the course of a conversation reported by himself, "outside of thy palace gates there has been kindled a fire of oppression and violence, such as are forbidden both by the Book of God and the Traditions of the Prophet! Prince of Believers! you have given to the *Zimmis* power over the Moslems. They vex them, they oppress them, they despoil them of their lands, they rob them of their money, they treat them with rudeness, and you they make use of merely as a tool for their private ends; but know and remember that they will avail you nothing when you appear before God upon the day of judgment."

The khalif promised to amend his ways; and whenever a Moslem of the requisite capacity was forthcoming, to expel from office a *Zimmi*. But either Moslems of the proper kind were not to be found, or the khalif was not in earnest in the matter; at any rate, under the khalif Mehdi, the successor of al Mansour, the outcry of the Faithful became louder than ever. The gates of the khalif's palace were beset by a clamorous crowd, protesting against the intolerable arrogance and oppressiveness of the *Zimmis*, who were everywhere exercising authority over the people of God. Again they had recourse to a saintly personage to lay their griefs before the prince, and again al Mehdi promises that they shall be redressed. He sends a circular to the governors of the provinces,

ordering the dismissal of the *Zimmis* from all posts in the government, and decrees, further, that if after this, a Christian writer be discovered in the service of a Moslem, the writer shall lose his hand. A large number of writers are said, in consequence of this order, to have been thus savagely mutilated. But under the khalifs Haroun and al Mamoun, the *Zimmis* again acquired the ascendancy which naturally belongs to industry and mental capacity; and when al Mutawakhil ascended the throne, almost the entire administration of the country was in their hands. It is an incident which will be found repeated in the history of every Muhammadan country. If these exhibit internal order and prosperity, it is only at those seasons when the fundamental principles of Islam are in abeyance.

The new khalif had no sooner exhibited his zeal for orthodoxy, than he was overwhelmed with complaints and petitions against the *Zimmis*. In response to these, he published a manifesto to the following effect:—

"It has come to the knowledge of the Prince of Believers, that certain personages, destitute of judgment and reason, avail themselves of the assistance of *Zimmis* in the conduct of business, and contract with them relations of friendship, to the exclusion of the Moslems. They confer upon them power and authority over the subjects of the Empire; they connive at their oppressions and perfidies, when they ought, on the contrary, to treat them as enemies. The Prince of Believers regards such a state of things as exceedingly grave; he disapproves and condemns it; and desires to act in the favour of God by utterly destroying it. In consequence he has sent orders to the governors of provinces and cities, to the generals commanding armies and frontier forts, not to admit *Zimmis* into the public service. . . . . God has endowed the

Moslems with everything needful without having recourse to these infidels, who give companions to God; who regard His messengers as impostors; who obstinately reject His signs; and who place another God by the side of Allah. But there is no other God but He, the one, and without equal."

This decree was followed by another, ordering that henceforth Jews and Christians should wear yellow garments; that they should not wear white, lest they might be mistaken for Moslems; that their stirrups must be made of wood; their new churches and synagogues destroyed, and the capitation tax doubled. The *Zimmis* were to be excluded from the public baths, which were used by the Moslems; they were not allowed to employ a Moslem in any menial capacity; and an officer of the police was appointed, whose special duty it was to see that they transgressed none of these ordinances. Even the cemeteries of the *Zimmis* were not spared. The graves were levelled with the earth, and the endeavour made to obliterate every trace that could indicate the spot as a resting-place for the dead.

The Free-thinkers and the Shias were treated with equal rigour. The Court of Inquisition which had been set up by the khalif Mamoun was now made use of to punish heresy and latitudinarianism. These vigorous measures rallied round the khalif a strong body of supporters. The orthodox doctors everywhere became, of course, his devoted adherents; and their example was followed by the great mass of the people. The khalif made use of his power to rid himself of all those whom he either feared or hated. His first victim was the

vizier of the khalif Wathik ;* then the kadi Ahmed ibn Abi Douad was disgraced, and his property confiscated; and so strong did the khalif feel himself to be, that he

* The name of this officer was Muhammad ibn az Zaiyat *(the son of the oilseller)*. "When Ibn az Zaiyat was vizier, he caused a large lantern to be framed of iron, and fastened with nails, the sharp points of which projected inwards, like needles. In this machine he used to torture officers of the civil administration and other delinquents from whom he meant to extort money; as often as the victim turned round or moved from the intensity of his sufferings, the nails entered his body, and put him to excruciating pain. Ibn az Zaiyat was the first who ever imagined such an instrument of torture. When the sufferer cried out to him, 'O vizier! have compassion on me!' he used to answer, 'Compassion is mere weakness of character.' When he was himself imprisoned by al Mutawakhil, that khalif ordered him to be chained in irons of fifteen pounds weight, and put into the same lantern. To his cry of 'O Commander of the Faithful! have compassion on me!' he answered in the words *so often* addressed by the vizier to other sufferers, 'Compassion is mere weakness of character.' Whilst undergoing these torments, Ibn az Zaiyat asked for ink and paper, and wrote as follows:—

> "'Such is the way of earthly things; from day to day they fleet on and pass away, as visions seen in sleep. Cease repining! Such events are the vicissitudes which fortune transmits from man to man.'

These lines he sent to al Mutawakhil, who was prevented by business from attending to them, but the next morning he read them, and gave orders to deliver the vizier. When they came to take him out, they found him dead. . . . . He had passed forty days in the lantern. . . . . After his death, the following lines were found written with charcoal on the side of the lantern in his own hand—

> "'Let him who knows where sleep is to be found direct toward it one who longs for it. May God have mercy on the compassionate man who will lead sleep to my eyes! I wake, but he sleeps by whom I am despised.'"

(*Ibn Khall.*, vol. iii. pp. 254, 255.)

did not shrink from obtaining the murder of the Turkish chief Itach, by whom he had been raised to the throne. The Turkish bodyguard did not dare to avenge the death of their chief, though aware at whose instigation he had met his death, so firm was the hold which the khalif had acquired upon the affections of the people by his repressive and persecuting policy.

The great leader and confessor of the orthodox party, the Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, died during this reign full of years and honours. (A.H. 241, A.D. 855). The city of Baghdad was thrown into mourning. One hundred thousand men and sixty thousand women followed the procession which accompanied the body of the Imam to its last resting place; and twenty thousand Christians, Jews, and Magians were reported to have been miraculously converted to Islam on the day of his death. One of his disciples received shortly after an assurance of the blessed state of the departed Imam, through the medium of a dream.

"I saw," says Ibrahim al Harbi, "in a dream Bishr the Barefooted,* who seemed to come out from the mosque of Rusafa, bearing something in his sleeve, which swung about, and I said, 'What hath God done with thee?' He replied, 'He hath pardoned me and honoured me.' And I said, 'What is that in thy sleeve?' He replied, 'Yesterday the soul of Ahmed ibn Hanbal came unto us, and pearls and rubies were scattered over it, and these are some I picked up.' I said, 'What were Yahya ibn Main and Ahmed ibn Hanbal doing?' He answered, 'They were gone to visit the Lord of all created things, and the table was laid out for them.' I said, 'Why didst thou not eat with them?' He replied, 'The Lord knew that I had to abstain from eating; so He allowed me to look on His sacred face.'"

* See page 42.

This dream established the veracity of several important doctrines. It proved that in the next world the Faithful would "look on the sacred face" of God, which the heretical Free-thinkers had declared to be impossible. And the assurance it gave of the blessedness of Ahmad ibn Hanbal established the truth of the doctrine for which he had suffered stripes and imprisonment. The Koran, therefore—that Koran which was read in the Mosque every Friday—was the eternal and uncreated Word of God. It had been transcribed by the hand of the Almighty from "the everlasting table" into one volume on paper, which was conveyed by the Archangel Gabriel to the lowest of the seven heavens. There he had revealed it to the Prophet piece by piece, through a period of twenty years. Last once in every year Muhammad was allowed the felicity of seeing the entire volume, magnificently bound in silk, and adorned with gold and precious stones of Paradise. In the last year of his life he enjoyed this glorious privilege twice. Any one who, either in act or word, questioned a single syllable of the Koran, was regarded as an infidel, and was in peril of being torn to pieces by the devout people of Baghdad. Thus we read that when Rhadi was khalif (A.D. 934), there was residing in Baghdad a man named Ibn Shanabud, an eminent master of the Koran readings, and a pious, well-intentioned man. Having become the sole depository of some rare and singular readings of the Koran, he introduced them into his recitations from the book, while presiding at the public prayers. This was deemed by the people of Baghdad as an audacious and

blasphemous departure from the primitive revealed text; and the indignation became so general and intense, that the vizier caused Ibn Shanabud to be arrested and flung into prison. An assembly was then convoked of kadis and Koran readers, the vizier himself presiding; Ibn Shanabud was summoned before them, and ordered to recant. He treated the Court with the greatest insolence; but having been flagellated seven times, he became convinced of his errors, and said, "I renounce my manner of reading, and in future I shall follow no other than that of the manuscript drawn up by the khalif Othman ibn Affan, and that which is publicly received." The vizier ordered this declaration to be taken down, and made him subscribe his name to it. It was, however, found impossible to set him at liberty, as the populace were waiting without to murder him as soon as he appeared; and he had to be smuggled out of Baghdad by night, and kept in a place of concealment, till his monstrous blasphemies had passed away from the memories of the people.

But though crushed and expelled from Baghdad by the fierce zeal of the khalif and the Hanbalites, the schools of the Free-thinkers, continued to exist at Basra. They were no longer possessed of political power; but they did not cease from interminable disputations. These disputations have no interest for any rational creature. Their almost exclusive theme was the co-existence of the unity of God with a plurality of attributes. How was this possible? If the attributes were regarded as modes of our consciousness in apprehending God, the Deity shrank into a sterile abstrac-

tion, regarding which it was impossible to feel any emotion whatever. If, in order to vivify this sterile unity, we endowed it with eternal attributes, the unity itself seemed to perish. On one or other horn of this dilemma, the doctors of Free-thought in Basra continued for some half century to impale themselves, without achieving any other perceptible result. Nevertheless, the school has an interest for the students of Moslem history, because it trained up and supplied with weapons, the man who first gave to the orthodox creed a scholastic basis of argument. This man was named Abou'l Hasan al Ashari. The Free-thinkers, it was said afterwards, went with their heads up till such time as God produced al Ashari to the world.

Al Ashari was born in Basra about A.H. 270 (A.D. 883-84). He was at first a Free-thinker himself, and studied under Abou Ali al Jubbai, an able master in the science of dogmatic theology, and a warm partisan of the Rationalist school. The occasion of al Ashari's rupture with his preceptor was the following:—Al Ashari proposed to al Jubbai the case of three brothers, one of whom was a true Believer, virtuous and pious; the second, an infidel, a debauchee, and a reprobate; and the third an infant—they all died, and al Ashari wished to know what had become of them. To this, al Jubbai replied, "The virtuous brother holds a high station in Paradise; the infidel is in the depths of hell; and the child is among those who have obtained salvation." "Suppose, now," said al Ashari, "the child should wish to ascend to the place occupied by his virtuous brother, would he

be allowed to do so?" "No; it would be said to him, 'Thy brother arrived at this place through his numerous works of obedience towards God, and thou hast no such works to set forward.'" "Suppose, then," said al Ashari, "that the child should say, 'That is not my fault; you did not let me live long enough; neither did you give me the means of proving my obedience.'" "In that case," answered al Jubbai, "the Almighty would say, 'I knew that if I allowed thee to live, thou wouldst have been disobedient, and incurred the severe punishment of hell; I therefore acted for thy advantage.'" "Well," said al Ashari, "and suppose the infidel brother was here to say, 'O God of the universe! since you knew what awaited him, you must have known what awaited me; why, then, did you act for his advantage and not for mine?'" Al Jubbai had not, so we are told, a word to say in reply, beyond expressing his conviction that al Ashari was possessed by the devil. The latter was convinced by this discussion that the Almighty elects some for mercy, and others for punishment, and that His acts are not the result of any motive whatsoever. He therefore made a public renunciation of his belief in man's free will, and of the opinion that the Koran was created. This occurred in the great Mosque of Basra on a Friday. He was sitting in the chair from which he taught, when he cried out as loud as he could, "They who know me, know who I am; as for those who do not know me, I shall tell them I am Ali ibn Ismail al Ashari, and I used to hold that the Koran was created, that the eyes of men shall not see God,

and that we ourselves are the authors of our evil deeds. Now I have returned to the truth; I renounce these opinions, and I take an engagement to refute the Free-thinkers, and expose their infamy and turpitude."

If, said al Ashari, we contemplate this visible creation, ascending from the lowest forms of life to the highest, we become aware, from inward experience, that nothing in all this wondrous world carries within itself the power which called it into existence. Man comes into the world endowed with certain capacities. These he can use; but he can produce nothing which has not already been given to him. And what is true of man, we know must be true of all inferior types of existence. We are, therefore, constrained to place this creative power somewhere outside of the creation. This power must be almighty, intelligent, and possessed of volition, because in the structure of the visible universe we find everywhere the effects of such attributes as these. Thus we are conducted to a belief in a Creator, in whom unity of essence is co-existent with a plurality of attributes. What then are these attributes? They are not, so said al Ashari, the Deity himself, neither are they something independent of Him; but they may be likened to the actions of men, which are neither the man himself, nor have they any existence apart from the man.

All things proceed from the will of this Creator, the good and the evil, the useful and the hurtful. His mind and purpose are incapable of change. He wrote upon the everlasting Table, the destiny of man and the world, before either had been summoned into

existence. Nevertheless al Ashari admitted that there was a difference between the unintelligent growth of trees and vegetables, and the actions of men wrought with a conscious adaptation of means to ends. But he insisted that man had no power to convert will into action. He "acquired" action by a special creative act of God; that is to say, when a man desired to do a certain thing, good or bad, the action corresponding to the desire was, there and then, created by God, and, as it were, fitted on to the desire, so that it seemed to grow out of it, though it did nothing of the kind. In this way al Ashari believed that he preserved the moral responsibility of man, without allowing that anything could come into existence without the immediate interposition of the creative Deity. It was, however, objected to this solution, that it placed the affections and desires of men beyond the control of the Creator—an objection which al Ashari failed to meet, and which his disciples ascribed to a spirit of morbid and carping criticism which could not be too strongly reprehended.

As to the visibility of God, al Ashari held, that it was essential to a complete existence that it could be seen. God, therefore, unless He could be seen, would not fulfil the conditions of perfect existence—a supposition that was, at once, ridiculous and blasphemous. The promise that the Faithful should see God was, moreover, plainly announced in the Koran; as, for example, in the 22nd verse of the 75th Sura, where it is written:—

> "On that day shall faces beam with light,
> Outlooking towards their Lord."

Words, such as these, would be destitute of meaning unless God was there to be looked at, and capable of being seen. At the same time, he considered that this beatific vision was not possible to man in his normal human state. To suppose this would be to invest the Deity with a material body, and so lapse into the damnable heresy of "identity."

Al Ashari conceived that for the enjoyment of this beatific vision, a sixth sense would be bestowed upon men, whereby they would obtain, as it were, through the medium of the intellect, an immediate intuition of the glory and greatness of God. He maintained, further, that seeing and hearing are eternal attributes of God; but the passages in the sacred writings which ascribed to Him a face and two hands, he considered to be metaphors adapted to human intelligence. Nevertheless, what the revelation makes known concerning the things of the invisible world—namely, the Pen, the Preserved Table, the Throne, the Footstool, Paradise, and Hell—he thought, should be accepted in their literal signification, because in such revelations there is nothing absurd or incredible. Likewise, all that is revealed in the Traditions regarding the future life—namely, the examination in the grave, the bridge into Paradise, the division of human kind into the saved and the lost—must be received precisely as they are written, and not explained away into metaphors.

Regarding the nature of the Koran, he taught that the Word of God exists in the mind of God, and is, of course, eternal and uncreated. The Koran is the manifestation of this Word; but the vocal sounds

through which the Word was made known to the Prophet, these being subject to the conditions of time, are, necessarily, created.

But the main element in the system taught by al Ashari is its uncompromising assertion of the sovereignty of God. He rejected, as impious, the notion that there exists in man any light or standard whereby to predict the actions of God. It is the merest folly and presumption to say that the wicked man will be punished in the next world because of his sins. His judgment rests with God, and what sentence God will pronounce upon him, can be known to God alone. He may, out of mercy, forgive him; it may be that the Prophet will intercede for him, and God accept of that intercession; it may be that he will be punished for a time, and then translated into heaven; and it may be that he will be plunged into the fire of hell, and there remain for ever and ever. All these issues are possible, and we have no means of calculating which is the likeliest. Arguing in the same spirit, he rejected the notion that God must, of necessity, receive the penitent sinner into favour, or deal with any man according to what we should consider a spirit of equity. Just and unjust are terms applicable only to those who are subject to a law; and God is above all laws. True it is, that the Koran teaches us to expect that the sincere repentance of a believer will be accepted by God; but we must not on that account cease to remember that to commit "injustice" is impossible with God. For injustice means to act with arbitrary caprice in a sphere where the actor has

no legitimate authority; and God is the universal ruler.

Al Ashari also emphatically rejected the contention of the Free-thinkers, that the unassisted reason of man can rise to a knowledge of good and evil, or have any opinions whatever as to what is necessary, and what is indifferent or optional. All duties are made known through revelation. Without revelation man cannot form a conception as to what he ought to do, or what he ought not to do. Neither, apart from revelation, has he any right to infer that in the next world what he calls the good man will be rewarded, and what he calls the bad man punished. These notions are the results of a childish delusion which makes God subject to the moral laws He has imposed upon His creatures. But God is not subject to any such laws. There is no existing thing that can demand an account from Him, concerning His actions. But all existing things must render an account to Him, and receive with meekness and resignation whatever His sovereign will pleases to inflict upon them. "Verily," says the Prophet, "there are none in the heavens or in the earth but shall approach the God of mercy *as a slave*."

The last word of Muhammadan theology is but an amplification of that single text.

PART III.

# THE DECLINE OF THE KHALIFATE.

# CHAPTER I.

## THE LOSS OF TEMPORAL POWER.

### A.D. 847—1050.

THE name of Tartary has been given in Europe to that immense region extending almost entirely across Asia from the Caspian Sea to the Eastern Ocean. The most eastern division of Tartary is the country of the Mautchous, which fills up the interval between China and Siberia, having the Sea of Japan as its eastern boundary, and the Hingun mountains as its western. On the western limits of this division commence the spacious plains roamed over by the tribes of Mongolia; and to the west, again, of Mongolia, is Independent Tartary, comprising Bokhara, Khiva, Khokand, and other small states. This part of Asia formed the home of the Turcomans. According to the learned Chinese scholar, De Guignes, the ancestors of these Turks or Turcomans were a people dwelling to the north of the northern provinces of China, and known to ancient Chinese historians as "the Barbarians of the Mountains." Two thousand years, he tells us, before the birth of Christ, we obtain our first glimpse of this people, living in tents pitched upon carts, and moving in these travelling houses along the banks of the rivers,

and over the plains which promised to furnish the best pasture for their flocks. For the next fifteen hundred years, only some fitful gleams—few and far between—illuminate the obscurity of Chinese history, but we can discern by the uncertain glimmer vast hordes of these barbarians entering the northern provinces of China, and spreading misery and devastation in every direction. The Great Wall of China was constructed (B.C. 210) as a protection against their terrible raids. When, at length, the daylight of historical knowledge has arisen, we find these barbarians united into a great and powerful nation under a single sovereign. For two centuries and a half they continued to be the scourge of the Chinese dominions. Advance towards civilization they made none. They practised none of the arts of sedentary life. They built no cities; they carried on no trade. They lived by plunder; their amusements were the chase and the foray. In their dreadful and monotonous history, as pourtrayed by the marvellous industry of De Guignes, we hear of nothing, year after year, but huge swarms of horsemen traversing the country, either pursuing or pursued, harrying, plundering, and burning. So it goes on until the close of the third century after Christ, when the reader is greatly rejoiced to find that the barbarians have fallen into a disunited and feeble condition; that on all their frontiers, hosts of infuriated Chinese are pressing in; that a terrible famine has come in to aid the avengers; that one great battle after another utterly breaks up their power, and terminates "the Empire of the Hioung Nou," after a duration of more than thir-

teen hundred years. Their very name was lost and forgotten, a portion of the conquered people being absorbed into other tribes, and a portion finding new homes for themselves in what we now call Western or Independent Tartary, where they became known by the name of "Turks."

It was not until nearly the close of the first century after the Hejira that the banners of Islam were carried into the regions beyond the Oxus, and only after a great deal of hard fighting that the oases of Bokhara and Samarkand were annexed to the dominions of the khalif. In these struggles, a large number of Turks —men, women, and children—fell into the power of the Moslems, and were scattered over Asia as slaves. The women were remarkable for their beauty. "Ah!" sighs Hafiz, in one of his lyrics, "if that Turkish girl of Shiraz would but take possession of my heart, I would give for the black mole on her cheek the riches of Samarkand and Bokhara." The men were remarkable for their commanding stature, and their courage and hardihood in war. In course of time, they became converts to Islam, and rose to positions of trust and importance.

So early as the khalifate of the second Abbaside, Turkish officers were enrolled in the imperial service; but the khalif Mamoun was the first sovereign who conceived the idea of basing the royal power on a foundation of regularly drilled Turkish soldiers. Menaced by a Persian insurrection, if he leaned for support upon the Arabs; menaced, and indeed assailed, by an Arab insurrection if he favoured the

Persians; he hoped to extricate himself from this dilemma by the constitution of an Imperial bodyguard composed of Turkish slaves.

This policy was adopted and greatly extended by his brother and successor, al Mutasim. Under his superintendence, the original bodyguard of four thousand Turks was rapidly enlarged, until it numbered seventy thousand men recruited from among the provinces of Egypt and Afrikia, and from Ferghana, Samarkand, and other regions lying beyond the Oxus. The khalif's attachment to these mercenary soldiers awakened a bitter jealousy among his Arab subjects. And in A.H. 223, a conspiracy was discovered among his Arab Emirs, at the very moment it was ripe for execution, which had for its object the deposition and murder of al Mutasim, and the substitution in his place of a son of the khalif Mamoun. The plot, however, was discovered, and the ringleaders executed; and this abortive attempt had no other result than to bind the khalif more closely than ever to his mercenary soldiers.

The Turkish chiefs enjoyed a power of life and death, which they exercised with the unsparing cruelty characteristic of the race.* The soldiers treated the

* I give an example. "Al Afshin (the chief of the Turkish officers) bore envy towards Abou Dulaf al Kasim ibn Isa, for his knowledge of the pure Arabic language, and for his bravery. He therefore plotted against him, and caused witness to be borne that he had committed treason and murder. He then had him arrested on a pretext he imagined, and having held a sitting to try him, he ordered him to be brought forth along with the headsman that was to put him to death. When news of this reached ibn Abi Douad, he instantly mounted his horse, set off with the notaries who hap-

population of Baghdad as so much dust beneath their feet. A favourite amusement with them was to ride, at full gallop, through the narrow and crowded bazaar, trampling down old men, women, and children, and the sick and infirm. The populace retaliated, maltreating or murdering every Turkish soldier whom they found alone. Hence were occasioned bloody riots and fighting in the streets. The people cursed the khalif, who had let loose this scourge upon them; and upon one occasion, an old man seized the bridle of al Mutasim's horse, and vehemently reproached him for the miseries he was bringing upon the people entrusted to his care. Al Mutasim, startled by the depth of bitterness which this incident revealed, resolved to abandon Baghdad, and erect a new capital for himself. He pitched upon an open plain abutting on the Tigris, but about eighty miles higher up the river than Baghdad; and there he built the city of *Sir-man-rai*, or

pened to be present at his tribunal, and came in on al Afshin, before whom Abou Dulaf had just been led for execution. He then stopped and said, 'I am a messenger to thee from the Commander of the Faithful; he commands thee to do no ill to al Kasim ibn Isa, and, moreover, to give him up to me.' Turning then to the notaries, he said, 'Bear witness that I have delivered to him the message sent by the Commander of the Faithful, and that al Kasim is alive and in health.' The notaries answered, 'We are witnesses thereof.' So Afshin could not do al Kasim harm, and Ibn Abi Douad went instantly to the khalif al Mutasim, and said, 'Commander of the Faithful! I have fulfilled in thy name a message which thou didst not give me, yet I count it one of my best deeds, and through it I hope for Paradise!' He then told him what had passed, and the khalif approved his conduct; and having sent for al Kasim, he set him at liberty, and gave him a present. He then severely reprimanded Afshin for having dared to act so."—*Ibn Khall. Biog. Dict.*, vol. i. p. 63.

Samarra, as a residence for himself and his mercenary cohorts. This imprudent act reduced the Commander of the Faithful to a helpless puppet in the hands of his Turkish soldiery. At Baghdad there was a large and courageous population, to whom, in case of need, the khalif could make appeal; at Samarra there was nothing. The chiefs of the bodyguard were supreme, and could dispose, as they pleased, of the headship of the Muhammadan world. The names of these chiefs were Itach and Wassif.

On the death of Wathik, the son of Mutasim (A.H. 232, A.D. 847), these two men proclaimed as khalif a brother of the late sovereign, by name Jaafar. He received the appellation of "Al Mutawakhil" (*he who relies upon God*). I described in my last chapter the well-conceived policy which enabled al Mutawakhil to reign for fourteen years independently of the Turkish chiefs. He would not, however, disband his mercenaries, and in the end they succeeded in ridding themselves of a sovereign whom they deemed insufficiently submissive.

Al Mutawakhil had conceived a deep dislike for the elder of his two sons, and the natural inheritor of his throne. He inflicted every sort of humiliation on him. The name of the younger son was engraved on the coinage; when the khalif was unable to preside at the public prayer, the younger of his two sons officiated in his stead. The elder was reviled and abused; in open durbar the khalif would overwhelm him with opprobrious epithets, and upon one occasion caused his favourite, al Fath ibn Khakan, to give the

prince a severe beating. These outrages at once terrified and exasperated the young man; and he entered into a conspiracy with the chiefs of the Turkish body-guard to murder his father, and mount the throne himself. At the head of this conspiracy was a Turk —Bogha the younger—the chamberlain of the palace. He chose as the murderer of the khalif, a Turkish soldier, Baguir by name.

Never had the khalif appeared gayer than on that evening, which was to be his last in this life. He had assembled around him his familiar friends, his courtiers, and his singing girls; and music and revelry chased away the silence of the night hours. Nevertheless those who were present, when looking back upon the events of the evening, could recall more than one incident which might have revealed that the Angel of Death was present in that festive chamber. The conversation turned upon the power and splendour of the great kings of old, and the preternatural pride engendered in them thereby. Suddenly the khalif turned towards Mekka and prostrated himself in the dust. Then he took up a handful of earth, and flung it on his beard and on his head: "I am but the servant of God," he cried, "it is fitting that he who is to return to dust should repudiate pride." The shadow of the death angel was evidently upon him. But, presently, the sadness passed off. The wine-cup circled gaily round; the musicians and the singers recommenced their strains; and a piece was performed which was an especial favourite of the khalif. But this night it availed only to awaken a saddening remembrance. Al

Mutawakhil turned to his favourite, Fath ibn Khakan, "Of all those," he said, "who heard that air when it was first played, there remain none but you and I;" and he burst into tears. A second dismal foreboding. At this moment a servant entered, bearing a robe of incomparable beauty—a present to the khalif from a beloved mistress. The khalif attired himself in it, and seemed to be pleased; but then, as if stung by a sudden thought, he tore the robe off his shoulders, and rent it from one end to the other. "Go!" he said to the slave, "and restore this garment to your mistress, and tell her to keep it as my winding-sheet." A third omen more terrible than either which had preceded it. But again the wine-cup circled, and the song and dance went on hour after hour.

But three hours of the night still remained; and the khalif, overcome with wine, lay helpless on the couch where he had been sitting. Suddenly, from without, the ears of the revellers were startled by the tramp of armed men; Baguir entered the room, followed by ten Turks. Their faces were veiled. Their naked scimitars flashed fearfully in the glimmer of the expiring lights. The pages, courtiers, dancers, drinkers, and singers fled in consternation. The murderers rushed straight to the couch where the khalif lay extended in the heavy sleep of drunkenness. His favourite Fath ibn Khakan alone remained to defend or die with his master. For some moments he succeeded in keeping the murderers at bay. There was a terrible uproar; the clash of the weapons mingled with the shrieks of those who had fled from

the banqueting hall, and sought in vain for a way of escape. Bogha the younger had closed every avenue leading to the spot where the tragedy was being enacted. Fath ibn Khakan was speedily cut down and killed. The sharp edges of the Turkish scimitars awoke the khalif from his drunken stupor. The hall reverberated with his shrieks of pain and terror. But soon all was over. The corpses of the khalif and his favourite were rolled up in the carpet on which they had just feasted and drunk, and flung into a corner of the hall. There they remained, unthought of or disregarded, till the evening of the next day, when they were interred together.

The murder of the khalif Mutawakhil is the commencement of a very dark and terrible period in the history of Baghdad. It extends over a space of nearly ninety years. During almost the whole of that period, the fierce Turkish soldiery were the irresponsible rulers of the ill-fated city. They set up what khalif they pleased; they imprisoned, blinded, poisoned, or hacked him in pieces as soon as from any cause they became weary of their choice. The streets of Baghdad, the country round, were the scenes of incessant fighting between the rival Turkish chiefs. Meanwhile, in the empire around there happened what always does happen during the declining years of a great Moslem empire. The outlying provinces became virtually independent states. The system of Islam is specially conducive to this process of disintegration. Being, as it is, merely a multitude of rules, so long as those rules are enforced, the inhabitants of a province have no motive to

prefer one ruler to another. The man who can enforce order and suppress rivals is at once recognized as the divinely-commissioned ruler, though he be, as one of the Traditions puts it, "a negro slave with his ears and nose cut off." This ready submission to victorious force, while it provokes ambitious spirits to rise against constituted authority, powerfully counteracts the anarchy which would otherwise proceed from these incessant resolutions. Thus, while in Baghdad one phantom khalif after another rose and vanished, in Khorasan, in Egypt, in Northern Africa, military adventurers set up kingdoms, which attained to no small degree of greatness and prosperity. But in the capital itself matters went on from bad to worse. In the year 329 (A.D. 942), the Turkish chiefs put up the khalifate for sale; and after a great deal of haggling, it was purchased by a certain Abou Ishak Ibrahim, who then assumed the title of the "God-fearing" (*al Mottaki*). Further to replenish their funds, the Turkish chiefs allowed a celebrated robber, Hamdi, to exercise his profession without molestation, on the condition that he made a monthly payment into the Treasury of twenty-five thousand dinars. On this admirable servant of the State, the "God-fearing" bestowed a robe of honour. In the same year a frightful famine desolated the country round Baghdad. The mortality was so great that the dead were flung without care or ceremony into a common trench. The wives of the khalif fled famished from the harem, and sat by the wayside to implore the passers-by for a morsel of food. At this fearful time, the Turkish chiefs did not scruple to

levy an enormous tax on wheat, barley, and vegetables, though the prices were already enormous; while the unpaid soldiery were allowed to spread over the cultivated country, and carry off the harvest just as it was ripe for the sickle.

A frightful corruption of morals everywhere prevailed. Several of the khalifs, within the narrow area where their authority was dominant, were veritable incarnations of evil and ferocity. Thus, one sovereign —al Mutadhid—converted his palace into a human slaughterhouse, where scenes of indescribable horror were enacted. He was one of those royal monsters who are to be found not unfrequently in Oriental history. Raised above the reach of public censure, surrounded with slaves, whose lives are, as it were, in the hollow of his hand, the Oriental despot seldom escapes the fury of his own evil passions. He feeds them into madness, and then becomes their victim. He plunges into sensuality, as it were into a bath, and when his jaded appetites crave for some other stimulus, he seeks after a zest and relish for life in the contemplation of human agony. Evil becomes his good. Such a man was the khalif al Mutadhid. He delighted in the spectacle of human suffering. He caused his wives and his slaves to be slaughtered before him, in order to watch their dying pains. Some were roasted upon spits; some transfixed with arrows; some had their heads buried in the earth, their bodies extending upwards; others, again, were put to death in ways too revolting to describe. Thus he reigned and acted for the space of nine years, when he went mad. He supposed himself

to be haunted day and night by a spirit from the other world; and the people declared the spirit to be a demon from hell, who recognized a congenial spirit in the bloodthirsty khalif. Of another khalif—al Kahir —we are told that he was exceedingly cruel. He never moved from room to room of his palace without carrying in his hand a long spear. With this he transfixed his slaves and attendants if they caused him the least displeasure, and often without other pretext than the desire to slay some one.

The followers of the Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, who were numerous in Baghdad, declared that the sufferings of the Faithful were due to the lax observance of the precepts of the Prophet. This was true enough; but these well-meaning people were anxious only to make clean the outside of the cup and platter. They only aimed to reproduce an exact conformity with the rites of Islam. For this purpose they formed themselves into vigilance committees, to discover who neglected the stated times of prayer, who kept musical instruments in his house, and so forth. Their furious and misdirected zeal greatly aggravated the sufferings of the wretched people. The heel of the oppressor was not removed from their necks; but many means of solace were banished from their homes. Private houses were broken into to search for wine and musical instruments; people suspected of being proficients in the wicked arts of dancing and singing were assaulted and beaten; all feasting and signs of merriment were sternly repressed. These measures proved, however, ineffectual to restore order and peace. Half of the

once beautiful and flourishing city was now a mass of unpeopled ruins; and the citizens, seeing no other means of escape from the tyranny and lawlessness of the Turks, secretly applied to Ahmad ibn Bouyeh, a successful military adventurer, to take possession of the capital of Islam. In response to this invitation, Ahmad set out from Ahwaz, and marching upon Baghdad, obtained possession of the city without having to fight a battle. (A.H. 334, A.D. 945.)

The princes of the House of Bouyeh ruled in Baghdad until the year 447 (A.D. 1050), when they gave way to another and a mightier conqueror, Togrul Beg, the Seljuk chief. But the accession of Ahmad to the supremacy in Baghdad is a noteworthy event in Moslem history, as the period when the khalif made a formal renunciation of his temporal dominion, remaining simply the Imam, or spiritual head of the Faithful. This, therefore, will be a fitting place to explain, at greater length than I have yet done, the ideas embodied in the person of the khalif.

Royalty, according to Moslem philosophical writers, is an institution based on the necessity of things. Men gather together in order to procure for themselves the means of subsistence. But this desire for subsistence impels them to tear from each other by violence whatever each man requires, or fancies he requires, for the support of his own life. The unchecked indulgence of this rapacity produces anarchy, and impedes the objects for which men have associated together. Therefore, men were prompted to choose a king from among themselves, whose mandates all were to obey, and

whose function it was to preserve order and good will among his subjects. When such an election has been made, an empire has been founded. But the elected king frequently falls into evil ways, and pursues a course of conduct fraught with mischief to his subjects. He imposes taxes upon them which they are unable to bear; then they rebel: then ensue wars, revolutions, rapine, disorder; in short, there is a relapse into that anarchic condition from which the election of a king was thought to have sufficed as a redemption. From this experience men learned that, in addition to a king, they must have a code of laws which both king and subjects are bound to obey. This is what was done by the Persians and other nations: These codes were the work of wise men skilled in the art of legislation. They were founded upon principles sanctioned by the reason. But a code of this description is obviously defective, because it is an attempt to see without aid from the light of God; and it is written in the Koran that "he to whom God has not imparted His light is buried in darkness" (Sura xxiv. 40). The inspired legislator alone knows what is best fitting for the welfare of men, because he knows the rule of conduct which will profit them upon the great day of judgment. Such a legislator was Muhammad. His laws are bright with the "light of God." He held the keys of both worlds; and his laws conduct the diligent observer of them to everlasting felicity. When he died, the khalifs, his successors, became his delegates or lieutenants. They were also termed *Imams*, or leaders. When an assembly of Moslems meet together for

prayer, an *Imam* is chosen, who leads the prayer, and the congregation regulate their motions by his, prostrating themselves when he does so, and rising when he rises. In like manner, the khalif is set up on high as the *Imam*, or leader of the Faithful, in all the business of life. He must be a scrupulous observer of the law himself, and diligent in enforcing it upon others.

The election of an Imam is imperative. Certain audacious Free-thinkers and obstinate Separatists have denied this. But the general agreement of Moslems since the foundation of Islam is a sufficient refutation of this monstrous opinion, which is as contrary to human reason as to revelation. And the Koran speaks with no uncertain voice on this matter. In the sixty-second verse of the fourth Sura, God says, "Obey God and His Prophet, and those of your people who exercise government over you." The latter clause would be devoid of meaning if there was no Imam or khalif.

The qualities requisite in an Imam are four: knowledge, integrity, mental and physical soundness. Knowledge is necessary in order to administer the law of God aright; the nomination of an ignorant Imam is invalid. Integrity is indispensable, because the Imamate is a religious dignity. The mental soundness of an Imam is a thing essential, because he is the leader of the people in war; and the conduct of war requires courage, foresight, and force of character. For a similar reason, his body, and his limbs, and organs of sense, must be free from imperfection. Madness, blindness, deafness, dumbness, render a man unfit for

the position of Imam, as also the loss of a hand or arm, a foot or a leg. The Imam ought, too, to be a member of the tribe of Kuraish, and chosen by a free vote of the citizens of Mekka and Medina. Hardly any of the khalifs fulfilled all these conditions, and consequently, among strict Moslems, it is a doctrine that Islam has been administered by only four veritable Imams—the "rightly-guided khalifs": Abou Bekr, Omar, Othman, and Ali. But the Muhammadan world, in general, was not so exacting. They recognized the Commander of the Faithful in the prince who ruled with the title of khalif in Damascus or Baghdad, in Cordova or Kairo. The one condition absolutely essential was that the sovereign thus reigning should be a member of the tribe of Kuraish.

No regal splendour encircled the "rightly directed" khalifs. They were the administrators of the Divine law; but that august duty was not regarded as one which, socially, raised the khalif above his former companions. He, and they, alike were the servants of Allah. There was no difference between them; and the smallest deviation from the instructions of the Divine law was deemed sufficient to deprive the khalif of the obedience of the Faithful. Thus, it is related, that upon a certain occasion, the khalif Omar was about to address the people assembled in the Mosque at Medina, when a man stepped forward, and declared that they did not intend any longer to accept Omar as their leader. "Wherefore not?" asked the astonished khalif. The man then explained that a partition of

plunder had been made a few days ago, and among other things of a piece of cloth. Now he (the speaker) had obtained a portion of this cloth, and he knew it was not sufficient to make a garment, because he had tried; whereas he now saw Omar wearing a garment of this identical material; it was, therefore, manifest that Omar had made an unfair division of the plunder, and, by so doing, forfeited his position as Imam. Omar acknowledged the apparent justice of this criticism, but explained that a friend of his had added his piece of cloth to the portion allotted to the khalif, and thus enabled him to make the suspicious garment he was at that moment wearing. The friend named having corroborated this statement, the man in the crowd consented to withdraw his motion, and the general harmony was restored.

The khalifs of Damascus very speedily laid aside this primitive simplicity. They lived in spacious palaces, and fared sumptuously; they surrounded themselves with multitudes of guards and state officials. But they assumed nothing of the priestly character. They professed, like their predecessors, the "rightly-directed khalifs," to be merely administrators of a law already complete. With the Persian revolution these simple ideas underwent a change. The Persians regarded the possessor of sovereign power as animated by something of a Divine life, in virtue of his birth. This Divine life they supposed to be incarnate in the khalifs of the House of Abbas on account of their descent from the Prophet. The new notion of sovereignty became apparent in the creation of the

office of vizier. This was an office borrowed from the old Sassanian kingdom. The title *vizier* is derived from a word which signifies, *he who bears the weight;* and the idea embodied in this office is that of a mediator between the sovereign and his subjects. The khalif or Imam, withdrawn from all active participation in the affairs of state, was regarded as a channel of Divine power, to legalise and sanctify the acts of others. By delegation, the vizier was clothed in all the authority of the Imam; while the purity of the Imam escaped the danger of being sullied by any breaches of the Divine law committed by the vizier. The vizier thus was all-powerful. But his was a power derived wholly and exclusively from the khalif. A breath could slay him, as a breath had made. Thus we are told concerning Abou Eyoub, a vizier of the khalif al Mansour, that for a long period he never went into the presence of the sovereign without fears for his life—al Mansour, without apparent cause, having contracted a great aversion to him. But as day after day he withdrew unharmed, it was said that he had an ointment prepared by a magical operation, with which he rubbed his eyes before he entered. This idea got such credence among the people that *Abou Eyoub's ointment* became a current expression. One day as he was holding a public sitting, a messenger came to him from the khalif. On seeing him, Abou Eyoub turned pale; and when the man had retired, the bystanders expressed astonishment at the signs of fear exhibited by the vizier, who at that time was in high favour with his master. On this Abou Eyoub

repeated to them the following fable: "It is related that the falcon said to the cock, 'There is not on earth a more ungrateful animal than you are!' 'Why so?' said the cock. 'Because your masters took you when yet in the shell, and had you hatched, bringing you thus into the world; they fed you with their hands, and you remained among them till you grew up; but now, not one of them can go near you without your flying to this side and that, and screaming out. As for me, I was taken from the mountains when already aged, and they instructed me, and tamed me; then they let me go, and I catch game in the air, which I bring to my master.' To this the cock answered, 'Had you seen as many falcons on the spit and ready for roasting as I have seen cocks, you would be even more fearful than I.' And you, my friends," continued the vizier, "did you know what I know, you would not wonder at my being afraid even in the height of the favour which you see me enjoy." The presentiments of Abou Eyoub proved very true. The khalif's wrath at last fell upon him; he was deprived of his property, after the infliction of tortures so severe, that he died shortly after from the cruel effects of them.

As the temporal power of the khalifate waned, the priestly ideas connected with the office of the Imam obtained greater precision and importance. The adventurers who rose to power in the provinces salved their consciences, and stilled the murmurs of their subjects, by obtaining from the reigning khalif a formal investiture in the power their right hands had achieved.

Under the Bouide princes the khalif, for the first time, made a formal renunciation of his temporal power, even within the area of Baghdad. He conferred upon his deliverer, Ahmad, the title of Moizz ad Dawlat, which signifies *he who causes the State to flourish.* He publicly constituted him the *Sultan*, or Chief Guardian of the State; he caused him to be clothed in a royal robe, and with his own hands placed a diadem upon his head; his name was stamped upon the coinage, and inserted in the public prayers immediately after that of the khalif.

Henceforth the khalif lived in mysterious seclusion —the supreme Pontiff or High Priest of Islam. The possessor of this dignity was, as before, liable to deposition, liable to murder; he was frequently subjected to insult and indignity; but the sense of his spiritual power seems to have grown deeper and more awe-inspiring, as the vessel of clay which contained it became weaker and weaker. No victorious soldier could call his conquests his own, until his authority had been ratified by the khalif; and Mahmoud of Ghuznee, in the plenitude of his power, felt that his greatness lacked solidity and foundation, until he had sought and received the robe of investiture from the powerless Imam resident in Baghdad.

The seclusion in which the khalifs lived deepened with the lapse of years; so that when the rabbi Benjamin of Tudela visited that city, he found that only once a year were the citizens gratified by the appearance in public of the Imam of Islam. Of this solitary appearance, as well as of Baghdad, he gives a descrip-

tion,* which a historian of Islam is bound to quote at length:—

"The palace of the khalif at Baghdad is three miles in extent. It contains a large park of all sorts of trees, both useful and ornamental, and all sorts of beasts, as well as a pond of water led thither from the river Tigris; and whenever the khalif desires to enjoy himself and to sport and to carouse, birds, beasts, and fishes are prepared for him and for his councillors, whom he invites to his palace. This great Abbasside is extremely kind towards the Jews, many of his officers being of that nation. He understands all languages, is well versed in the Mosaic law, and reads and writes the Hebrew language. He enjoys nothing but what he earns by the labour of his own hands, and therefore manufactures coverlets, which he stamps with his seal, and which his officers sell in the public market. These articles are purchased by the nobles of the land, and from their produce his necessaries are provided. The khalif is an excellent man, trustworthy and kind-hearted towards everyone, but generally invisible to the Muhammadans. The pilgrims which come hither from distant countries on their way to Mekka in Yemen, desire to be presented to him, and thus address him from the palace: 'Our Lord, light of the Muhammadans and splendour of

* I have quoted the rabbi at this place, in order to throw into a consecutive shape what I desired to say on the khalifate; but the rabbi did not visit Baghdad until a century and a half after the capture of Baghdad by the Bouide prince. Two successive khalifs had then been murdered by assassins, and this had partly been the occasion of the jealous seclusion in which they passed their lives.

our religion, show us the brightness of thy countenance;' but he heeds not their words. His servants and officers then approach and pray, 'O Lord! manifest thy peace to those men, who come from distant lands, and desire shelter in the shadow of thy glory;' and after such petition he rises and puts one corner of his garment out of the window, which is eagerly kissed by the pilgrims. One of the lords then addresses them thus: 'Go in peace, for our Lord, the light of the Muhammadans, is well pleased, and gives you his blessing.' This prince being esteemed by them equal to their Prophet, they proceed on their way, full of joy at the words addressed to them by the lord who communicated the message of peace.

"All the brothers and other members of the khalif's family are accustomed to kiss his garments, and every one of them possesses a palace within that of the khalif; but they are all fettered by chains of iron, and a special officer is appointed over every household to prevent their rising in rebellion against the great king. These measures are enacted in consequence of an occurrence which took place some time ago, and upon which occasion the brothers rebelled and elected a king among themselves. To prevent this in future, it was decreed that all the members of the khalif's family should be chained, in order to prevent their rebellious intentions. Everyone of them, however, resides in his palace, is there much honoured, and they possess villages and towns, the rents of which are collected for them by their stewards; they eat and drink, and lead a merry life

"The palace of the great king contains large buildings, pillars of gold and silver, and treasures of precious stones. The khalif leaves his palace but once every year, viz., at the time of the feast called Ramadan. Upon this occasion many visitors assemble from distant parts, in order to have an opportunity of beholding his countenance. He then bestrides the royal mule, dressed in kingly robes, which are composed of gold and silver cloth. On his head he wears a turban, ornamented with precious stones of inestimable value; but over this turban is thrown a black veil, as a sign of humility, and as much as to say: 'See, all this worldly honour will be converted into darkness on the day of death.' He is accompanied by a numerous retinue of Muhammadan nobles, arrayed in rich dresses, and riding upon horses; princes of Arabia, of Media, of Persia, and even of Thibet, a country distant three months' journey from Arabia. This procession goes from the Palace to the Mosque on the Basra gate, which is the Metropolitan Mosque. All those who walk in procession are dressed in silk and purple, both men and women. The streets and squares are enlivened by singing, rejoicings, and by parties who dance before the great king, called khalif. He is loudly saluted by the assembled crowd, who cry, 'Blessed art thou, our lord and king.' He thereupon kisses his garment, and by holding it in his hand, acknowledges and returns the compliment. The procession moves on into the court of the Mosque, where the khalif mounts a wooden pulpit, and expounds their law unto them. The learned Muhammadans rise, pray for him,

and praise his great kindness and piety; upon which the whole assembly answer, 'Amen.' He then pronounces his blessing and kills a camel, which is led thither for that purpose, and this is their offering, which is distributed to the nobles. These send portions of it to their friends, who are eager to taste of the meat killed by the hands of their holy king, and are much rejoiced therewith. He then leaves the Mosque, and returns alone to his palace, along the banks of the Tigris, the noble Muhammadans accompanying him in boats until he enters this building. He never returns by the way he came, and the path on the bank of the river is carefully guarded all the year round, so as to prevent anyone treading in his footsteps. The khalif never leaves his palace again for a whole year.

"He is a pious and benevolent man, and has erected buildings on the other side of the river, on the banks of an arm of the Euphrates which runs on one side of the city. These buildings include many large houses, streets, and hostelries for the sick poor, who resort thither in order to be cured. There are about sixty medical warehouses here, all well provided from the king's stores with spices and other necessaries; and every patient who claims assistance is fed at the king's expense until his cure is completed. There is further the large building called *Dar-ul-Maraphtan* (the abode of the insane), in which are locked up all those insane persons who are met with, particularly during the hot season, every one of whom is secured by iron chains until his reason returns, when he is allowed to return

to his home. For this purpose they are regularly examined once a month by the king's officers appointed for that purpose; and when they are found to be possessed of reason, they are immediately liberated. All this is done by the king in pure charity, towards all who come to Baghdad, either ill or insane, for the king is a pious man, and his intention is excellent in this respect. Baghdad is inhabited by about one thousand Jews, who enjoy peace, comfort, and much honour under the government of the great king. Among them are very wise men and presidents of the colleges, whose occupation is the study of the Mosaic law. The city contains ten colleges; the principal of the great college is the Rabbi R. Sh'muel Ben Eli, principal of the college Geon Ja'acob. The provost of the Levites is the president of the second; R. Daniel the master of the third college; R. El'asar, the fellow, presides over the fourth; R. El'asar Ben Tremach the fifth college. He is master of the studies, and possesses a pedigree of his descent from the Prophet Sh'muel, who rests in peace, and he and his brothers know the melodies that were sung in the Temple during its existence. R. Chasadiah, principal fellow, is the master of the sixth; R. Chagai, the prince, the principal of the seventh; and R. Esra, the president of the eighth college; R. Abraham, called Abou Tahir, presides over the ninth; and R. Sakhai B. Bosthenai, master of the studies, over the tenth college. All these are called "the Idle," because their sole occupation consists in the discharge of public business. During every day of the week they dispense justice to all the Jewish inhabitants

of the country, except on Monday, which is set aside for assemblies under the presidency of the Rabbi Sh'muel, master of the college Geon Ja'acob, who on that day dispenses justice to every applicant, and is assisted therein by the ten Batlamin (the idle) presidents of the colleges.

"The principal of all these, however, is R. Daniel Ben Chisdai, who bears the titles of 'Prince of the Captivity' and 'Lord,' and who possesses a pedigree which proves his descent from King David. The Jews call him 'Lord Prince of the Captivity,' and the Muhammadans, 'noble descendant of David;' and he holds great command over all Jewish congregations under the authority of the Commander of the Faithful, who has commanded to respect him, and has confirmed his power by granting him a seal of office. Every one of his subjects, whether he be Jew or Muhammadan, or of any other faith, is commanded to rise in the presence of the Prince of the Captivity, and to salute him respectfully, under penalty of one hundred stripes. Whenever he pays a visit to the king, he is escorted by numerous horsemen, both Jews and Gentiles, and a crier commands aloud, 'Make way before our Lord, the son of David, as becomes his dignity!' Upon these occasions he rides upon a horse, and his dress is composed of embroidered silk; on his head he wears a large turban, covered by a white cloth, and surmounted by a chain or diadem.

* * * *

"The Prince of the Captivity possesses hostelries, gardens, and orchards in Babylonia, and extensive

landed property inherited from his forefathers, of which nobody dares deprive him. He enjoys a certain yearly income from the Jewish hostelries, the markets, and the merchandise of the country, which is levied in form of a tax, over and above what is presented to him from foreign countries; the man is very rich, an excellent scholar, and so hospitable that numerous Israelites dine at his table every day.

"At the time of the installation of the Prince of the Captivity, he spends considerable sums in presents to the king or khalif, his princes and nobles. The ceremony is performed by the act of the laying on of the hands of king or khalif, after which the prince rides home from the king's abode to his own house, seated in a royal state carriage, and accompanied by the sound of various musical instruments; he afterwards lays his hands on the gentlemen of the university.

"Many of the Jews of Baghdad are good scholars, and very rich; the city contains twenty-eight Jewish synagogues, situated partly in Baghdad and partly in al Kharkh on the other side of the river Tigris, which runs through and divides the city. The metropolitan synagogue of the Prince of the Captivity is ornamented with pillars of richly-coloured marble, plated with gold and silver; on the pillars are inscribed verses of the Psalms in letters of gold. The ascent to the holy ark is composed of ten marble steps, on the uppermost of which are the stalls set apart for the Prince of the Captivity and the other princes of the House of David.

"The circumference of the city of Baghdad measures three miles; the country in which it is situated is rich in palm-trees, gardens, and orchards, so that nothing equals it in Mesopotamia; merchants of all countries resort thither for purposes of trade, and it contains many wise philosophers well skilled in sciences, and magicians proficient in all sorts of witchcraft."

# CHAPTER II.

## THE SELJUK SULTANS.

A.D. 1050—1093.

WHEN the Empire of the "Barbarians of the Mountains" to the north of China was broken up, the fragments had been cast all over the northern and central parts of Asia. A part had been absorbed into other tribes, and lost their name and distinguishing characteristics; a part had emigrated westward, penetrating as far as the steppes of the Volga, and displacing there the tribes which overwhelmed the declining Roman Empire; another portion, as we mentioned in a previous chapter, was known to the Greek Empire and the Muhammadans, as the Turkish nation; still another fragment remained in Siberia, where they took or acquired the name of the Hoei-ke. They remained in Siberia until they had become a numerous nation, when they moved southward, towards the northern frontiers of China. During the sixth century they were subjugated by the khans of the western Turks; but the barbarities of their conquerors drove them into rebellion, and after a fierce and protracted struggle, they wrested a large extent of territory from the Turks, and laid the foundation of an empire which

eventually extended over the whole of Eastern Tartary. They were divided into fifteen hordes, each of which was ruled by its own chief. They lived under their tents with countless flocks and herds, and fed upon the milk and flesh of their cattle. In A.D. 646 they placed themselves under the protection of the Chinese Empire. The Emperor sent into their country about a thousand Chinese officers, who divided the country into divisions, allotting one to the chief of each horde. Sixty-eight posts were also established across the country, where provisions were always kept ready for the use of travellers. Though troubled with frequent revolts, the authority of the Chinese Emperor was acknowledged by the Hoei-ke until about the middle of the eighth century. About that time the khan of one of the hordes had succeeded in establishing an unquestioned supremacy over all. He had also greatly extended the limits of his empire, and he wrung from the Chinese government an acknowledgment of his independence. His dominions were bounded on the west by the river Irtisch and the Altai mountains, and on the east by the river Amoor. His son, Kole Khan, was able to render the most brilliant services to the Chinese Emperor. He marched an army into the Northern Provinces, and crushed with fearful slaughter a formidable insurrection. He was rewarded with the hand of an Imperial Princess.

But the alliance of these barbarians was never, at best, more than a broken reed to depend upon. The weight of a feather was sufficient to convert them from friends to enemies. Ten years later we hear of an

immense swarm of Hoei-ke carrying fire and sword through the province of Chausi.

Up to this time the Hoei-ke had lived with the simplicity common to all Tartars. There was no difference between the prince and the people; but intercourse with the Chinese court corrupted this primitive simplicity. The khans abandoned the old customs; they built grand palaces, and caused their wives to be magnificently attired.

Another century (A.D. 856) passed with the old monotonous catalogue of wars and massacres—forays into the Chinese dominions—desperate reprisals; one khan after another dying in battle, or falling beneath the dagger of an assassin. At last the dim outlines of a more than commonly desperate struggle between the two nations come into vision like a landscape seen through driving snow. Among the valleys of the hills which surround Lake Konor, the Chinese troops have hemmed in their retreating and wearied enemy. The Hoei-ke are cut to pieces; their prince is wounded; ten thousand prisoners are beheaded on the battle-field; and their empire is extinguished in the blood of that disastrous struggle.

A remnant, however, of the hordes retired westward, and founded a new kingdom, which extended from Kashgar to the frontiers of the Empire of Islam beyond the Oxus. This neighbourhood made them acquainted with the religion of Unity; and a traveller who visited their country shortly after the death of the khalif al Mutasim, found that the greater part of the people had become Muhammadans. An internal

dispute resulted in a fraction of these hordes separating themselves from the main body, and, under the guidance of a celebrated warrior named Seljuk, emigrating in a mass into the Muhammadan dominions lying beyond the Oxus. The dynasty of the Samanides at this time ruled in Bokhara, and they allotted pasture lands to the wild shepherds, who were known in their new country by the name of "Seljukides." Here they lived, their numbers increasing with extraordinary rapidity; but preserving, in the midst of luxury and refinement, the simple barbarism which they had brought with them from their distant homes on the banks of the Irtisch. They were loyal and useful subjects of the Samanide princes; and their prowess in battle made good the frontier of Bokhara against the unbelieving hordes beyond it, who were continually striving to break in and plunder the rich and flourishing oasis.

It was after the fall of the Samanides, that Mahmoud of Ghuznee committed the fatal error of compelling these barbarians to cross the Oxus, and settle in the waste lands of Khorasan. His vizier, Arslan, in vain pointed out the disastrous consequence of this fatal measure. The Sultan was inflexible, and the vizier, it is said, actually sickened and died at the thought of the calamities preparing for Asia at the hands of these fierce barbarians. Some conception of their numbers may be formed from an anecdote which is related by Mirkhond. The Sultan Mahmoud inquired of Israil, the son of Seljuk, how many cavalry, in the event of an emergency, they could send to his

assistance. The young Turk drew an arrow from the quiver suspended from his shoulder, and laying it before the Sultan, said, "Send that, and one hundred thousand horse will hasten to your aid." "And if more were wanted?" The youth drew forth a second arrow. "This," said he, "would bring fifty thousand more." "And if the crisis were still imminent?" The young leader then laid his whole quiver at the feet of the Sultan. "Send that, and two hundred thousand cavalry will speed to your assistance." The Sultan, it is said, trembled at these words; but the rash deed had been done past recall. It was beyond his power to drive these strangers back again across the Oxus. They continued to increase in strength, ranging with their flocks and herds over the broad plains about the city of Merou. Three grandsons of Seljuk—Togrul Beg, Bigou, and Jaafar ibn Daoud—ruled over them. Fresh emigrations from the uplands, where originally they had their home, further swelled their numbers. The lands where at first they had been settled, rapidly became too limited to afford pasturage for their flocks. Great hordes, in consequence, broke away from the main body, and wandered, some in the direction of Ispahan, others into the province of Azerbaizan.

This vast roving population, moving amid a sedentary one, rich, civilized, and luxurious, could not long restrain the rapacious instincts of the barbarian. And their ravages in Balkh and Khorasan became so intolerable, that Musaoud, the son and successor of Mahmoud, determined to make a grand effort to extirpate them. In the year 428 (A.D. 1037) he marched

into the province of Balkh, threw a bridge across the Oxus, and entered the country beyond. The sudden setting in of winter, which threatened to cut him off from Ghuznee, compelled him, however, to suspend operations. The Turks, emboldened by his retreat, surrounded the city of Balkh, and Musaoud was obliged to hurry up by forced marches to save the place from capture. The Seljuks fell back to Merou as the Sultan approached, and from thence sent an embassy to the king, engaging to live in peace and quiet, provided an extension of grazing land was made to them, proportioned to their greatly increased numbers. These proposals were accepted by Musaoud, who then proceeded in the direction of Herat. But he had not advanced beyond a few marches, when the plundering propensities of the Seljuk Turks proved too strong for their recent amicable engagements. They attacked the rear-guard of the Sultan and plundered a part of his baggage. Enraged at this insolent treachery, Musaoud turned upon his pursuers, and every prisoner that fell into his hands was executed upon the spot. He then continued his march to Herat, and from thence to Naisapore and Tous. At Tous large hordes of Turks again assailed his columns, but were beaten off with heavy loss.

Such defeats, however, availed nothing in permanently diminishing the numbers, or effectually decreasing the strength of these terrible enemies of order and peace. In the spring of 431 they resumed the field in undiminished strength. Musaoud again attacked them, not far from Merou; but some of his

chief officers abandoned him at the commencement of the battle, and went over to the enemy. The cry of "treachery" was raised, and the Sultan's army began to fall back in disorder. "But the king," says Ferishta, "undismayed even by the defection of his officers, gallantly rode to the spot where he perceived the conflict most bloody, performing prodigies of valour, unequalled, perhaps, by any sovereign. But his efforts were vain; for when he looked round, he beheld his whole army, excepting the body which he commanded, *had devoured the paths of flight.* The king thus deserted, and seeing no hope from the efforts of his single arm, turned his steed, and trampling down the enemy, opened a road for himself with his own sword."

Upon the scene of their victory the Turks proceeded to the election of a king. A large number of arrows were collected into a bundle; and upon each of these was inscribed the name of a tribe, of a family, and a warrior. A child drew three of the arrows in presence of the whole army, and chance assigned the kingship to Togrul Beg, the grandson of Seljuk. This victory placed Khorasan in the possession of the Seljuks; Naisapore opened her gates to Togrul Beg; Herat submitted to Jaafar. And the khalif Kaiem groaning under the tyranny of the Bouides, and the bitter enemy of the Sultans of Ghuznee, despatched an embassy to the Seljuk camp, and caused the name of Togrul Beg to be inserted in the public prayer, trusting to find a friend and deliverer in the new conqueror. Many years, however, elapsed before Togrul Beg made

his entry into Baghdad. During that time he was pushing his conquests, north, south, east and west. The sufferings of the provinces overrun were terrible. Cities were plundered and burned, and their inhabitants massacred; corn-fields were trodden down beneath the hoofs of his steeds. Orchards and palm-groves were given to the flames, in order to provide grazing ground for his flocks and herds. Over waste and cultivated land alike, these plundering hordes passed like the scorching wind of the desert, blasting everything that lay in their path. The land might be as the garden of Eden before them; it became a desolate wilderness behind them.

In Baghdad, meanwhile, anarchy had once more become chronic. The Deilemite soldiers of the Bouide princes were Shias; the Turkish militia were Sunnis: hence endless faction fights. The populace sided with the one soldiery or the other, according to the doctrines they held; and the rival sects fortified themselves in different quarters of the city, where public worship was celebrated according to their distinctive rites. The Sunnis tore up the graves of eminent Shia doctors, and scattered their bones; the Shias practised like reprisals on the last resting-places of orthodox divines. They also burned the houses of their adversaries, and slew those of the Hanifites who fell into their hands. The khalif 'was powerless to redress these disorders. The Shias, indeed, did not scruple to omit his name altogether from the public prayer, and denounce him as an impostor, bearing merely the outward semblance of a true Imam.

New causes of disorder were in the year 446 added to these already enumerated. A Turkish general, Abou'l Hareth Arslan al Basasiri, exercised at the court of the khalif an almost unlimited authority. He was the representative and lieutenant of the Bouide Sultan. Between him and the khalif there was, of course, bitter enmity; but all intrigues to overthrow this arrogant official had been defeated by his foresight and energy. But in the year 446, Basasiri was compelled to quit Baghdad to make head against the rebels who swarmed on every side of the city. The khalif thought this a favourable opportunity for ridding himself of the man. He wrote to Togrul Beg, entreating him to enter Irak; and at his instigation, the Turks pillaged the house of the secretary and confidential adviser of Basasiri. Basasiri was apprised of these events when he returned to Baghdad. He retired at once to his house, situated in the western part of the city, and abstained from appearing at the court of the khalif, as it had been his wont to do hitherto. Shortly after he left the city altogether, and commenced to ravage the country round Baghdad. The khalif strove, but in vain, to pacify him; he would listen to nothing. He even attacked and carried by storm the town of Anbar, burned a large number of villages, and put to death, or mutilated, any important personages who fell into his hands, and whom he suspected of being hostile to him. At length it was arranged that Basasiri should proceed to a house called "The House of Penitence," where the khalif would condone the past, and clothe the penitent rebel in a robe of honour.

The general came, as agreed, to the door of the house, and prostrated himself before the Commander of the Faithful; but he declined to enter, repairing instead to his own palace.

The year following, by dint of repeated solicitations, the khalif prevailed upon Basasiri to attend the Royal Council Chamber, and formally make profession of his loyalty and submission. Hardly was this done, when a fresh cause of trouble became apparent. The Turkish soldiers broke into mutiny, alleging that al Basasiri withheld their pay, applying it for his own purposes. They demanded from the khalif's vizier (Abou'l Kasim ibn Maslama) permission to pillage his house and those of his partisans. The vizier, who was a rival and bitter enemy of Basasiri, joyfully consented. "This man," he told them, "has manifested perfidious designs, and is secretly in league with the Fatimide princes of Egypt; he has thrown off his allegiance to the lawful Imam, concerning whom he has made use of the most insulting epithets." The khalif al Kaim, notwithstanding his recent reconciliation with Basasiri, now hastened to pronounce him worthy of death. Encouraged thus by these high authorities, the Turks marched against the house of Basasiri, pillaged it from top to bottom, and left it a heap of ruins. The inmates of his harem were insulted and driven out into the streets; and his secretary, Ibn al Obaid, was flung into an ice-house. Basasiri fled to Rahabad, where he was joined by large numbers of Turks. He wrote to al Mostansir, the Fatimide khalif of Egypt, requesting him to act as mediator

between Basasiri and al Kaim. This Mostansir consented to do; but the Baghdad khalif sent back the Fatimide's letter, merely endorsed with the insulting query, all written in his own hand, "Who are you? who are you? tell me who *are* you?" Mostansir, wrathful at this insult, forwarded to al Basasiri large succours in men and money.

In the meanwhile, Togrul Beg, under pretence of a pilgrimage to Mekka, had entered Irak at the head of a strong army, and sought to obtain admission into Baghdad. The khalif, in opposition to the advice of his vizier and the officers of the Turkish militia, consented; on the 22nd Ramadan, 447 (December, 1050) the name of Togrul was inserted in the public prayer; and three days after he made his entry into the city. He had taken an oath, before entering, to be the faithful and obedient servant of the khalif; but, it is needless to add that he broke this immediately afterwards, and occupied the city in force. A dispute broke out between the Seljuk soldiers and some shop-keepers. The Baghdad Turks took the side of the citizens, the foreigners were driven out, and several of them killed and wounded. This riot was followed by a general attack upon the ill-fated city by the army of Togrul Beg. It was useless for the khalif and his vizier to protest their innocence. The Turkish chief denounced them as the murderers of his soldiers, and summoned the vizier to his camp to explain his conduct. On his arrival there he was arrested and flung into prison. With this occurrence the rule of the Bouides in Baghdad may be said to have terminated, and that of the Seljuks commenced.

Togrul Beg remained for a year inactive in Baghdad, neither visiting the khalif nor heeding his entreaties to put an end to the ravages and outrages perpetrated by his fierce and lawless soldiery on the wretched townspeople. But the increasing strength of Basasiri compelled him at last to take the field. This latter general had collected a considerable force of Turks and Deilemites and Arabs, who had fled from Baghdad to escape, and, if possible, revenge the cruelties practised by Togrul Beg's soldiery; added to these were the strong reinforcements he had received from Egypt. During Togrul Beg's long period of inaction, many cities had fallen into the power of Basasiri; in all these, the Mosques had been painted white, the official colour of the Fatimide khalifs; the names of the Abbaside khalifs effaced from their walls; and the public prayers read in, and the currency stamped with, the name of the reigning sovereign of Egypt. Togrul Beg had been content, in the first instance, to send his nephew Kutulmish, against Basasiri; but this commander having been routed, he took the field himself at the commencement of the year 449. A brief but vigorous campaign sufficed to dissipate the heterogeneous forces collected by Basasiri, and Togrul Beg returned in triumph to Baghdad.

The khalif now for the first time gave him a reception in state. Seated upon a throne seven ells high, with his face covered with a black veil, the black mantle of the Prophet thrown over his shoulders, and his staff in his hand, the khalif received the successful Turkish chief in the great hall of his palace. The

Sultan, accompanied by his generals, came up the Tigris by boat; they then mounted upon horses sent from the stables of the khalif, and rode to the palace. Togrul Beg was permitted to enjoy the high honour of kissing the hand of the khalif. The Commander of the Faithful, turning to his vizier, then spoke as follows—"Say to Sultan Togrul, that I acknowledge his services and rejoice at his coming. I deliver over to him the government of all the countries which God has given him for a possession. It will be his duty to treat with equity and beneficence the humble and the poor, and to walk in the ways of justice and moderation." When this speech was ended, Togrul Beg rose from his seat, once more kissed the royal hand, and then pressed it against his cheek. Seven banners were then waved over his head, he was clothed in seven robes of honour, and seven slaves, one from each of the seven kingdoms entrusted to him, were delivered over to him. Two crowns were placed upon his head: the one representing the sovereignty of Arabia, the other that of Persia. He was finally girt with a golden sword. When all was over, Togrul Beg made a movement as though he would prostrate himself at the feet of the Commander of the Faithful, but the khalif graciously hindered him from doing so, and twice gave him his hand to kiss. The khalif then presented him with a second sword, which the Turk girt on like the first, and the following title of honour was conferred upon him—"The Sultan of the Court, Togrul Beg, the right hand of the chief of Believers, the King of the East and of the West." At the same time, he was loaded

with magnificent presents; among these were fifty thousand gold pieces, a complete suit of armour, fifty boys beautiful as Peris, and fifty maidens lovely as Houris.

But the lustre of this splendid ceremonial was almost immediately drowned in the turmoil of war. Basasiri, though defeated in the field, was still potent for mischief. He persuaded some relatives of Togrul Beg to raise the standard of revolt; and the movement appeared so threatening that Togrul Beg moved out of Baghdad with the whole of his troops. This was just what Basasiri desired. He waited till Togrul Beg was fairly engaged with the rebels, and then advanced by forced marches upon Baghdad, which, since the departure of Togrul Beg, had again become a prey to anarchy. The Ghozzes, whom Togrul Beg had left behind him, had pillaged the palace of the Sultan, and committed all kinds of disorders.

On the eighth day of the month Dhulkadeh, Basasiri entered Baghdad at the head of four hundred men only, who presented a spectacle of wretchedness and squalor. His colours were those which he had received from Mostansir, and on which were inscribed the titles of that prince. The inhabitants of the quarter named Karkh, who were Alides, were extremely rejoiced at the arrival of Basasiri, and flocked to his standard. The Sunnis were equally enraged. These gathered round the khalif; and for four days there was incessant fighting in the streets and on the river. On Friday, 13th Dhulkadeh, the prayer in the Mosque of Mansour was made in the name of the khalif Mostansir; and the people were summoned to worship by

the usual Shia formula—"Salutation to the best of creatures!"

In the meanwhile, the khalif had surrounded his palace with entrenchments, and seemed determined to make a vigorous resistance. But his partisans melted away daily, while those of Basasiri increased, and the khalif, in despair, had recourse to Koraish, the Emir of the Arabs, who took him under his protection, and received him in his camp.

Basasiri made prisoners of the vizier and a functionary known as "the Chief of Chiefs." The latter was his mortal enemy, and Basasiri put him to death with a truly Oriental refinement of barbarity. He caused him to be clothed in a woollen gown, and placed a high-pointed cap on his head, and a leathern collar about his neck. In this state he was promenaded about the streets seated on a camel, and a man seated behind him whose business it was never to cease from smiting him with his fist on his head. This part of the proceeding being finished, he was clothed in an ox-hide, so that the horns rose exactly above his head; and thus disguised, he was suspended from a gallows by two iron hooks, which pierced his body. In this frightful state he lingered on till the close of the day, when death released him from his agonies.

The populace, meanwhile, had pillaged the palace of the khalif, where, it is said, they found incalculable riches. On the 14th Dhulkadeh, the prayer for the Egyptian khalif was repeated in all the Mosques of Baghdad. Basasiri also assembled the kadis and the

chief citizens, and compelled them to swear allegiance and fidelity to the Fatimide sovereign; and he transmitted to the same sovereign the black mantle and turban of the khalif al Kaim, together with a written declaration he had wrung from that unhappy sovereign, to the effect that neither he nor any of the descendants of Abbas had any right to the khalifate so long as the descendants of Fatima continued upon earth. For a whole year, from this period, the rule of the Abbasides in Baghdad was in abeyance. And there is little doubt that so daring and able a leader as Basasiri would have permanently established the Fatimide power there, but for the suspicions of al Mostansir himself. So long as Basasiri's had been a struggling and doubtful cause, the Egyptian khalif had been prodigal of his supplies in men and money, but now that his partisan touched at the goal of his endeavours, the Egyptian sovereign was appalled at his success. He feared lest he had created a monster who would devour him not less than his royal cousin of the House of Abbas. To prevent this, he cut off the supplies at this critical moment; and the result was that in the following year (A.H. 451), when Togrul Beg found himself at liberty to return to Baghdad, Basasiri was compelled to evacuate the city at his approach, and, in a battle fought shortly after in the neighbourhood of Koufa, was defeated and killed. With his death ended the brief sway of the Fatimide khalifs in the metropolis of Islam.

For these services, Togrul Beg demanded the hand in marriage of one of the khalif's daughters; and the khalif, powerlesss before his great vassal, was forced to

consent. But the marriage was never actually effected. The Sultan had retired to Rhe, there to make preparations to solemnize the nuptial ceremony with befitting magnificence. But he had now reached his seventieth year, and a sudden illness carried him off, A.H. 455 (September, A.D. 1063).

According to the Persian historian, Khondemir, Togrul Beg was a prince "valiant, just, prudent, and of excellent morality. He never failed to make the prescribed prayers five times a-day; he fasted the first two days of every week; and he never built a palace for himself without constructing a mosque alongside of it, taking care that the latter should be finished before the foundations of the first were laid." It is only the unreasonable Western mind that would require more of a prince than this.

Alp Arslan, the nephew and successor of Togrul Beg, carried on the havoc and devastation which had marked the career through life of his uncle. Togrul Beg had on two or three occasions invaded the Asiatic territories of the Byzantine Emperor; Alp Arslan carried these partial conquests to completion. He invaded in person the northern parts of Armenia and Iberia. He laid waste the country in the cruellest manner, for it was the notion of these barbarians that a country was not really conquered unless it was also depopulated. Iberia had been long celebrated for the industry of its inhabitants, the wealth of its numerous towns, and the valour of its people. There is no doubt they could have flung back the invaders had the Byzantine Empire come to their aid. But avarice was

the dominant passion of the Emperor, Constantine X., and rather than disburse his loved hoards, he preferred to look idly on, while his fairest provinces were laid waste and overrun. The country was, in consequence, compelled to submit to the Seljuk Turks, and the invaders settling upon it, like a swarm of locusts, swiftly converted the happiest and most flourishing portion of Asia into a scene of poverty and desolation.

From Iberia, Alp Arslan passed into Armenia. Ani, the capital, was stormed and taken, after a gallant defence, on the 6th June, 1064. The victor treated the vanquished citizens with savage cruelty. On entering the city, he gave directions to his followers to slaughter all whom they found there. Human blood flowed in torrents, and so great was the carnage, that the streets were literally choked up with dead bodies; and the waters of the river were reddened from the quantity of bloody corpses.

When the first fury of Alp Arslan's cruelty was a little abated, he issued orders to seize the most wealthy of the inhabitants who had not been killed, and torture them, to make them discover where their riches lay. He then pillaged the churches, murdering all the priests whom he found therein, some by drowning, and others by flaying alive. "In the midst of these horrors," says the Armenian historian, "the anger of the Almighty was displayed most conspicuously. For on a sudden the whole face of heaven became clouded; horrid peals of thunder, accompanied by sheets of the most vivid lightning, burst over the city; rain descended in such torrents as if a second Deluge were

approaching; and the streets were like so many seas, bearing on their surface the ghastly remains of the victims of the cruel and rapacious infidels, and with which every inch of ground before was covered. The dead bodies, by this rain, were swept into the river Akhurian." *

The capture of Ani was followed by an immense emigration of the people into the provinces of the Byzantine Empire lying to the west and south of their ancient possessions. In the meanwhile, other hordes of Turks had invaded the provinces of Mesopotamia and Chaldæa. They plundered the open country, putting all the armed men to the sword, and carrying off women and children to be sold in the slave-markets. They avoided coming in contact with the regular troops. Their plan was to exterminate the cultivators of the soil, and so convert the country into a vast grazing ground. The villages, farm-houses, and plantations were everywhere burned down, and the wells filled up. By these means, they succeeded in rendering the country so unfit for human habitation, that entire districts of Asia Minor were left vacant before the Seljuk power was able to conquer the cities.†

The same policy was continued under Malek Shah, the son and successor of Alp Arslan. Innumerable hordes were instructed to plunder the Roman Empire. The standard of the Prophet floated over the walls of Edessa, Iconium, Tarsus, and Antioch. Nicœa became the capital of the Seljuk Government of that

* Chamich's *History of Armenia*. Avdall's Trans., vol. ii. p. 151.
† Finlay's *Byzantine Empire*, vol. ii.

portion of Asia. Another army wrested Syria from the hands of the Fatimides, and the black flag of the Abbasides floated once more from the ramparts of Jerusalem. The broken fragments of the Asiatic Empire of Islam were reunited after a fashion; but the combining power was no longer Arabian, but Turkish. It was an entire and radical change of dominion.

The new state of things brought with it no pledge of permanence. The germs of decay and dissolution were implanted, from the first, deep in its constitution. These Turkish conquerors were still, as they had always been, utter barbarians. They brought with them no principles of government; they founded no institutions; they acknowledged no duties towards the subject populations. The courts of Alp Arslan and Malek Shah blazed, it is true, with barbaric splendour; but they were never more than the leaders and kings of a horde of marauders. The position of these Turks in Asia resembled that of the Mahrattas in India, when at the height of their power. Like them, they did not govern a province, but merely encamped upon it; like them, they were a multitude of rapacious robbers spread over the richest provinces of Central Asia to eat up the fat of the land. At the head of each horde was a chief, nominally dependent upon Malek Shah, but virtually independent, and waiting only for an opportunity to assume that position in name as well as in fact. So long as Malek Shah lived, the commanding genius of his prime minister, Nizam al Mulk held these discordant elements together.

But that minister knew that the task was beyond the power of any other living person; and only a few days before his death he predicted that his death and the disruption of the Seljukian Empire would be simultaneous. He spoke truly. In the year 485 (A.D. 1093) Nizam al Mulk was stabbed to death by an emissary of Hasan ibn Saba, the first Grand Master of the Assassins; and his master, Malek Shah followed him to the grave a few weeks afterwards. Then came the immediate breaking up of the Seljukian Empire into a number of independent principalities. Syria, Palestine, and all Asia Minor, were partitioned among a dozen different Turkish Emirs. Khorasan and Irak became the scene of a fierce civil war, extending over several years, between two sons of Malek Shah, Barkiaroc and Muhammad. Drought was added to the horrors of war; the people perished by thousands of famine; the incessant marching and counter-marching of the hostile armies destroyed the remnant of food which had survived the want of rain. To crown all, from the borders of Christendom a fresh scourge was beheld preparing for Islam. The hosts of the Red Cross passed the Bosphorus, and fought their way knee-deep in blood to the walls of Jerusalem. The capture of the Holy City struck like the point of a poisoned dagger to the heart of every true Moslem. There is a story in Saadi's "Gulistan," which tells more than pages of rhetoric could do, of the profound terror and suspicion, with all their attendant cruelty, which at this time possessed the minds of men. Two durweshes, he tells us, travelling together came to a certain city; they

were suspected by the townspeople of being spies, cast into a small cell, and bricked up. Saadi makes not the smallest commentary on the apparent irregularity of this summary proceeding. He merely goes on to say that a few days after, finding they were not spies, the citizens unburied them. One was dead; the other, a man accustomed to long fasts, was still living; from which circumstance Saadi draws the appropriate moral of the extreme utility of abstinence as a preservative in case of being buried alive. What a glimpse is here of a world sunk back into chaos!

In such a world, a sect like that of "the Assassins" would find its appropriate home. Hasan ibn Sabah extended his power far and wide; and in Persia or Asia Minor—wherever disorder is highest—we see amid the noise and confusion the gleam of his daggers as they strike some illustrious victim to the grave. The Assassins were the last and most fearful outcome of centuries of misrule. They could not have wielded the power which they did for a single year, had there been anywhere a really hearty and honest desire to suppress them; but there was not. The times were out of joint; centuries of wanton and pitiless war had seared the consciences and petrified the hearts of men. There was always some prince who needed an assassin to rid him of a rival he feared or a friend he distrusted, and who was ready to pay for the serviceable crime with his purse and his protection. And thus, though he never put an army into the field, the Grand Master of the Assassins never lacked an ally. As for the great body of the common people, they were, in

general, indifferent; though now and again they broke out in fits of fanatical fury against these impious heretics. They looked upon the Grand Master as only one more potentate by means of whom, as with plague and famine, blight and earthquake, the Master of the blessed Prophet harassed and tormented them. His daggers were not specially directed against them. Why should they specially endeavour to rid the world of him? And so it came to pass that a power based upon the practice of assassination was enabled to flourish, well-nigh unmolested, for nearly two hundred years.

# CHAPTER III.

## THE SECT OF THE ASSASSINS.

A.D. 1093—1214.

THAT might gives right is, perhaps, the strongest conviction of the Asiatic. Submission to the established fact is his great guiding principle of conduct. And this principle he clings to, not upon a prudential calculation, but with the fervour of religious faith; for, in truth, he perceives and acknowledges the presence of the earth's supreme ruler in every manifestation of victorious Force. Victorious Force is, in his eyes, the most convincing demonstration of the will of God which human nature can arrive at. Both convictions are embodied in the teaching of Muhammad. The religion of Islam and the religion of submission are synonymous expressions. But it was by its victorious, aggressive power that the religion of Islam was to demonstrate its Divine origin. Absolute submission was required of the believer, but it was submission to a power, armed with a sharp sword, which went forth conquering and to conquer.

Nothing can be conceived more alien to the speculative tendencies of the populations of Syria and

Persia than the theology of the Koran. Syria was the birthplace of gnosticism; Persia of the religion of Zoroaster. The peoples of both countries conceived of the Divine life as blending with and poured into the human, like light proceeding from the sun. God, according to the Koran, was cut off from his creatures by a deep and impassable gulf; but the sharp sword with which Islam was armed, was a proof of its divinity which neither Syrians nor Persians were able to resist. The victories of the Arabs convinced them, by a demonstration more potent than logic, that the Koran was the Word of God, and Muhammad his Prophet.

But this submission to the new faith could not obliterate ancient tendencies of thought. The minds which had evolved gnosticism out of the Bible, speedily set to work to discover their former convictions in the writings of the Arabian camel-driver. The disciples of Zoroaster were not long in finding a method for educing their ancestral beliefs out of the new revelation. This method was to unfold the hidden purport of the Koran by means of the principle of spiritual interpretation. God, so said these theosophists, according to the Moslem faith rigorously interpreted, is One, and consequently without attributes, unthinkable, incomprehensible. It is not possible to affirm regarding the Deity, either that He exists or that He does not—that He is powerful or weak; for to affirm regarding Him any of these things, is to assume that there is some resemblance between Him and His creatures. This would be to exalt men to a level with God, whereas it is laid down

in the Koran that *there is no other God but God.* Concerning God, therefore, nothing whatever can be either affirmed or denied.

Nevertheless, from such an origin as this, it being impossible to advance a step in any direction, these thinkers found themselves under a compulsion to affirm concerning God a number of very amazing things. Firstly, they laid down the doctrine that God did not create the world, at least immediately; He merely, by an act of will, manifested the universal Reason. This Reason was, in other words, God externalized. The Reason, having been thus manifested, began to create; and its first creative act was to produce the universal Soul, the essential attribute of which is *life*, as that of the Reason is *knowledge*. The universal Soul then brought forth the primary Matter, the essential attribute of which is *passivity*, in order that it may receive and conform itself to the ideal forms existing in the universal Reason. Together with this primary Matter, two other primitive and necessary beings came into existence—Time and Space. And from the interworking of these five existences, this earth, the heavenly bodies, and the universe were successively produced.

The world having been accounted for in this satisfactory manner, it became necessary to explain the origin of man. The appearance of man is the result of the desire experienced by the universal Soul to acquire perfect knowledge, in order to elevate itself to the level of the universal Reason, and reproduce it. With this object in view, it descends upon the earth, and spreads

itself over the surface, under the form of individual souls. But the universal Soul, by reason of its essential imperfection, is incapable of rising to the level of the Reason. It oscillates between the universal Reason, which is the spiritual principle, and the primary Matter, which is the material principle. To remedy this, the universal Reason transmits to earth its unceasing effusion, or the active intellect which, entering into the individual souls, engenders the human reason. But as there is in the upper world one universal Reason and one universal Soul, it is necessary that in the lower world also there should be perfect manifestations of each in some person. The incarnate Reason is named upon earth, the *Natik*, or *he who speaks;* the incarnate Soul, the *Base*, or *he who interprets.* The former is the revealing Prophet, of whom every word is as the light of the sun, or the rain from heaven, which descends and fertilizes the earth. The latter is he who interprets these Divine words, investigates their sense, and makes known their hidden treasures, as the earth produces the plant when it has drunk in the vivifying shower from heaven. But the universal Reason is deathless and eternal; the duration of the individual human life is limited. Consequently, the Reason incarnates itself in successive forms. This succession constitutes the series of Prophets, acknowledged by Muhammad, and set forth at length in the Koran. After the death of Muhammad, this universal Reason became incarnate in Ali and his sons, and subsequently in the Fatimide khalifs of Afrikia and Egypt.

God, therefore, being unknowable and incomprehensible, the object of worship for these sectaries was the universal Reason incarnate in the reigning khalif at Kairo. Amid the fragments of Alide literature which have been preserved, are certain prayers of the Fatimide khalif, Moezz-li-din-Allah, which exemplify in a startling manner this monstrous hypothesis. "My God!" such is the language ascribed to him, "I am as thou art, great by reason of thy supreme power. I am thy power, thy manifestation, thy will, and thy word! My God! grant to men that they may know me; save them, and cause thy light to shine forth! . . . . . My God! by me thou hast created all creatures, and from me thou hast drawn all thy messengers and all thy prophets. I am thy son, and thou art my father. I am one with thee as the effusion of light . . . . . is one with its source . . . . . I am thy revealed power, and through me thy striking signs are manifested!"

Such were the doctrines taught by Hassan, the first Grand Master of the Assassins. Such were the beliefs cherished by his followers. They account for the utter devotion with which his followers risked and lost their lives in carrying out his behests. In the Fatimide khalif of Egypt they beheld an incarnate deity. To kill his enemies, in whatever way they best could, was an action, the merit of which could not be disputed, and the reward for which was certain.

In the confusion which ensued upon the death of

the Sultan Malek Shah, Hasan ibn Sabah extended his power in every direction. In the wild and mountainous countries around the fortress of Alamut, in Tabaristan and Deilem, and in the province of Koumis and the hilly country of Kohistan, the most extravagant forms of the Alide heresy had always numbered numerous adherents. These adherents gave a ready ear to the teachings and exhortations of the missionaries he sent forth in every direction. But it was in the city of Ispahan that his doctrines seem to have earliest struck root, and gathered to themselves a formidable array of proselytes. These were scattered through the divers quarters of the city; but they were accustomed to assemble at night, carry off such of their adversaries as they could seize upon, and put them to death. In this manner they reduced the city to a state of abject terror. Everyone carried arms, and no one dared to walk abroad alone. If any returned not home at their appointed time, their families and friends at once concluded that they were killed. One day these Ismailiens seized a Muezzin, and the family of the unfortunate man began to bewail his death. The Ismailiens carried their prisoner to the roof of his house, and showed to him his own family weeping and lamenting. But so great was his terror, he dared not, by a single word, make known his presence.

It chanced that one day a resident of Ispahan, entering the house of an aquaintance, perceived there such a large accumulation of clothes and sandals, that his suspicions were awakened, and he told some neigh-

bours what he had seen. The inhabitants of the city caused an inquiry to be made, when it was found that these belonged to the people who had been murdered. The popular indignation broke forth; the quarters occupied by the Ismailiens were invaded by an angry crowd; all who were adherents of these doctrines, or who were suspected of being such, were seized and brought to a central part of the city. There a huge trench was excavated, and filled with burning materials. Into this representation of hell the Ismailiens were flung, one after the other, until the whole were consumed. A man was appointed to replenish the flame whenever it waned. He was known henceforth as Malek, the angel of death.

The establishment of the Assassins in Syria followed very closely upon their acquisitions in Persia. At the close of the eleventh century of our era they had established themselves in Aleppo. Their chief, an astrologer and physician, had converted to the Ismailien doctrines Prince Ridhouan, the Seljukian emir who ruled the city. He built for the sect a place of worship, and allowed the public celebration of their peculiar rites. The neighbouring princes wrote in vain, protesting against this scandalous protection of impious heretics. A great number of people embraced the new doctrines in order to bask in the sunshine of the royal favour. All who wished to live in peace and security had to humiliate themselves before the astrologer and his followers. Their numbers augmented continually. They practised the most outrageous tyranny on such of the inhabitants as did not

belong to their sect. They carried off women and children in the streets in open day; and it frequently occurred that an Ismailien meeting a well-dressed man of another sect, would strip him of his raiment without the latter daring to offer any resistance. The quarter in which they resided became an Eastern Alsatia; criminals of the worst kind escaped thither, and by declaring themselves Ismailiens, immediately obtained an asylum which no one was sufficiently daring and powerful to break in upon.

The year 495 (A.D. 1102) witnessed the first murder committed by the Ismailiens of Syria. Hosain, the Prince of Emessa, was at feud with Ridhouan of Aleppo. On the 12th of May, 1102, the former entered the principal Mosque of Emessa to recite the public prayer. He was on the point of marching against the Crusaders, and had already assembled his army. But while he was praying, three of the Assassins fell upon and slew him, though he was surrounded by guards. The murderers were immediately cut to pieces.

The Prince Ridhouan died; but his son and successor, Alp Arslan, continued for a time to protect the sect, as his father had done. They gradually extended their power, making many proselytes, over the province of Mesopotamia. Their most active missionary was one Beiram, who had fled into Syria to escape a sentence of death passed on him by the Sultan Barkiaroc. He travelled all over the country, seeking for converts chiefly among the lowest of the people. Finally, he entered the service of Thogtekin, the Prince

of Damascus, and obtained from him the cession of the strong fort of Paneas. He was no sooner established there, than his followers flocked to him from all sides. The Ismailiens acquired so much power and inspired so deep a terror through all Syria, that not a soul dared to raise a voice or hand against them. Every scoundrel in the country took to himself the designation of an Ismailien, as a convenient cloak for his malpractices. The doctors of the law, the learned men, and the whole body of the orthodox were subjected to constant insults and persecution. The terror of assassination had struck the energies of the bravest men with the torpor of paralysis.

The sect, nevertheless, occasionally encountered serious reverses. In the year 1113, the people of Aleppo, at the instigation of their prince, rose against their oppressors. Three hundred of the sect were slaughtered in the streets; two hundred were captured and thrown headlong from the lofty rock on which the citadel was built. There were not wanting members of the sect who vigorously assisted in this righteous carnage, in order to purge off the suspicion of heresy from themselves. In 1124, seven hundred more were put to the sword in the town of Diarbekir. But it was in 1129 that retribution fell upon the Order with a severity which, for awhile, put an end to their power in Syria. The Ismailiens in Damascus had entered into secret negociations with the Crusaders to admit them into that city, on the condition that the Crusaders placed them in possession of Tyre. But the plot was divulged before it could be put into

execution, and proclamation was made throughout the streets of Damascus to hunt out the Ismailiens, and slaughter them wherever found. Six thousand of these sectaries were massacred at once; a large number were captured and crucified along the walls of the city; and so implacable was the feeling against them, that a woman slew her own husband and daughter, who had become converts to the new doctrines, and suspended their heads to the door of her house. The Ismailien governor of Paneas, terrified at this overwhelming disaster, ceded that fortress to the French, and sought an asylum in the territory of the Crusaders. For a brief period the reign of the dagger was suspended in Syria.

Five years before this event (A.D. 1124), Hasan Sabah, the founder of the Order, had died at Alamut, or (as the orthodox historian briefly states it) "went to hell." From the day he entered Alamut until that of his death—a period of thirty-five years—he never emerged, but upon two occasions, from the seclusion of his house. Pitiless and inscrutable as Destiny, he watched the troubled world of Oriental politics, himself invisible, and whenever he perceived a formidable foe, caused a dagger to be driven into his heart. The roll of his victims would be too long to enumerate here. Warriors, statesmen, merchants—he spared none. But to the last he enforced among his followers the most rigid adherence to the letter of the Koran; and one of his last acts was the execution of his son because he had presumed to drink wine. His own time, it is said, he spent chiefly in prayer, and in the

composition of treatises setting forth and defending his religious beliefs.

Kia Busurgomid, the general and chief missionary of Hasan, succeeded him in the office of Grand Master. He reigned for fourteen years. His tenure of power is memorable for the murder of the khalif Mostarshed, which he caused to be perpetrated. Rashid, the successor of Mostarshed, at once began to collect an army to avenge his predecessor's death; but ere his preparations were complete, a party of Assassins entered the camp, and slew him in his tent. His army instantly dispersed. The intelligence of his murder gave occasion to great rejoicing at Alamut. Public festivals were held, and for seven days and nights the sound of kettledrums and cornets passed on, from one fortress-crowned hill to another, the glad tidings that the chief of the heretics had succumbed to the might of the true faith.

The bitterness of spirit on both sides had now reached the utmost limit of intensity. Curses and condemnations were rained down like a deluge by the spiritual upholders of the orthodox faith upon this cruel and impious sect. It was declared lawful, and indeed obligatory, to slay them, either in open war or as outlaws and infidels. It was pronounced impossible for one of this sect to repent, even if he wished to do so. He was irredeemably doomed to hell-fire; and his execution was commanded, even though he wished to abjure his errors, because perjury was one of the fundamental maxims of the order. On the other side, the doom which had struck two khalifs in succession produced

a profound and unwonted exaltation of spirit. They interpreted it as a manifest proof that the promised Mehdi must be about to enter upon his world-wide inheritance. The long night of suffering and persecution was plainly drawing to a close; the Imam so anxiously awaited was at last at hand; and the year of his redeemed was come.

In Syria, meanwhile, the order had recovered more than its ancient power, and that, too, in the face of difficulties which threatened at one time its very existence. The great Noureddin, Sultan of Aleppo, had completely checked the progress of the Crusaders, upon whom, in all seasons of difficulty, the Assassins had been wont to rely. His chief officer, the famous Salaeddin (*Saladin*) had marched an army to Kairo, dethroned the Fatimide khalif, and restored the supremacy of the Abbasides in Egypt. The Assassins of Syria, cut off from their parent stem, might have been expected to wither away like a fallen leaf. But about this time (A.H. 543, A.D. 1148-49), appeared among them Rashideddin as Sinan, who declared that in him, since the fall of the Fatimide khalifs, the universal Reason had become incarnate. Sinan was a native of Basra, and commenced his career as a devotee in the service of the Grand Master of Alamut. Aleppo was the first Syrian city in which he took up his abode. He affected an extraordinary sanctity, wearing the coarsest garments, and preserving a strict abstinence from wine. He was a man gifted with a most fascinating and persuasive power of speech, which won over large crowds of disciples. A frag-

ment of these discourses of his has come down to us. It is an address supposed to be spoken by the universal Reason speaking through the lips of Rashideddin. After enumerating the prophets of past ages in which it had been incarnate, the discourse adds that true religion was not perfected until the supreme Reason had been manifested to men in the person of Rashideddin. He is the witness, the supervisor, the lord of mercy. Whoever knows him knows the truth; and none can know him save those who are scrupulously exact in the fulfilling of his prescriptions. When he chastises, it is with justice; and when he pardons, his forgiveness is a free gift of his grace and liberality. "I am," the discourse concludes, "the sovereign dispenser of pity, the lord of forgiveness and of revealed truth."

Sinan was in the habit of delivering discourses similar to this, seated on a stone, himself as motionless as the stone on which he sat. His hearers, carried away by the power of his eloquence, deemed him to be, in truth, the incarnation of the supreme Reason. They were ready to honour him as a god, when, to their surprise and dismay, they discovered him to be lame. They proposed to kill him. The supreme Reason, they said, lived for ever, and by killing the present deformed and imperfect tabernacle in which it resided, it would be set free to take up its abode in a form better fitted to receive so august a denizen. This was an awkward moment for Sinan, but he succeeded in evading the application of this too-searching test of the truth of his teaching. He applauded the faith of his disciples, and

their zeal for the glory of the supreme Reason; but at present, the moment for this change had not arrived. The universal Reason, on grounds satisfactory to itself, had chosen to become incarnate in the imperfect form they beheld before them, and it would be an act of wanton disobedience on their part to attempt to oppose that choice.

Sinan abode in the fortress of Kehf. He built new fortresses, and repaired old ones belonging to the order throughout Syria; his disciples believed him to be possessed of power to work miracles; all the petty princes around trembled before the lord of so many secret daggers; and he reigned over the sect with undisputed ascendancy for more than thirty years. His power excited the jealousy of the Grand Master of Alamut; and Assassins were sent several times to Kehf to make away with the formidable lieutenant. But every attempt failed. Some of his intending murderers he discovered and executed; others he persuaded to abandon their purpose and take service under him.

But his most dreaded enemy was Noureddin, whose armies, from time to time, invaded his territory, until at length the Sultan resolved to march against the Ismailiens in person, and rid the world of the obnoxious sect. He wrote to Rashideddin a letter informing him of his intended purpose, and filled with menaces. To this the chief returned a haughty reply. He compared Noureddin and his idle threats to "the fly buzzing at the ear of the elephant." Other people had held similar discourse, but the universal Reason incarnate in the chief of the Ismailiens

had hurled destruction on them, and there were none to assist them.

"As for your words" (so runs the letter), "that you will cut off my head, and tear my fortresses from the firm rocks which sustain them, know that these are delusive thoughts, vain imaginations; for the substance is not destroyed by the disparition of its accidents, neither is the soul dissolved by the body. But to return to things external and sensible from things internal and intellectual. . . . You well know our external state, the character of our men, the sort of food for which they long, and for which they offer themselves to the abyss of death. . . . In a common current proverb it is said, '*Is a goose to be threatened with being cast into the river?*' Prepare therefore a tunic against misfortune, and a cloak against affliction; for evils of your own doing shall prevail against you . . . . like the animal who scraped with its hoof till it found its death,* and like him who cut off his nose with his own hand. To effect this will not be difficult for God."

To the ready superstition of those times, this strange letter must have been invested with a prophetic character; for ere his army entered the land of the Ismailiens, the great Sultan of Aleppo died (15th May, 1174).

At the close of the same year, Saladin laid siege to Aleppo, which he wished to wrest from the son of his old master, a child of twelve years of age. The vizier, Kumuchtekin, who governed in his name, despairing of making a successful resistance, sent a large sum of money to Sinan, and assigned to him several grants of land, on condition that he should undertake the murder of Saladin. On a freezing winter day several Assassins entered the camp of Saladin. They were recognized as such by

* An Arab caught a gazelle, but knew not how to kill it, when the animal, scraping with its foot upon the sand, uncovered a knife that was hidden beneath.

one of his officers. Him they slew, and then made a rush for the Sultan's tent. But the alarm had been given; the Assassins were surrounded, and after a desperate struggle, during which they killed or wounded several of their assailants, were cut to pieces to a man. Saladin, undismayed, continued to press the siege until compelled to raise it by the news that the Crusaders had laid siege to Emessa. His approach relieved that town; and in the following year (A.D. 1176) he laid siege to Azaz, situated to the north-east of Aleppo, and took it in thirty-eight days. This time again, Kumuchtekin, alarmed at the progress of Saladin, had recourse to Sinan, and won him over with large presents and promises. The Assassins disguised themselves in the uniform of Saladin's troops, and in this manner obtained free access to the camp. They took part in the military operations, exhibiting the greatest courage. One day (2nd May, 1176) the Sultan, according to his wont, came to the tent of the Emir Jawely Ali Saadi, which was erected near the mangonels. From thence it was his habit to inspect the war-machines, and encourage the soldiers by his presence. As he was distributing presents and rewards, the disguised Assassins mingled among the spectators. Suddenly one of them sprang forth from the crowd and struck at the Sultan's head with his dagger. The weapon glanced aside from the steel helmet, but slipping down, scratched the cheek and drew blood. The Sultan seized the murderer, and flung him to the ground, where he was instantly hacked to pieces. It was all the work of a moment.

Nothing dismayed, however, by the fate of their comrade, a second and a third murderer started forth with naked, uplifted dagger. But it was too late; the first spring had been made and failed, and twenty flashing swords were buried in the bodies of the murderers long before they could get within dagger's length of their victim. A fourth Assassin fled, and was also cut to pieces. Saladin took speedy vengeance upon Sinan. He laid waste his territory with fire and sword; slew a great number of his people, carried away a multitude as prisoners, and laid siege to Massiath—the strongest fortress in his possession. Sinan, in despair, sent word to Saladin's uncle—a near neighbour of his—that unless he instantly persuaded Saladin to withdraw, Sinan would be under the painful necessity of killing the uncle with the dagger of an Ismailien. The entreaties of his frightened relative had not the smallest effect upon Saladin; but his army, weary of fighting and laden with plunder, was angrily demanding rest; and Saladin was shortly after compelled to withdraw into his own dominions.

Kumuchtekin, though baffled in his designs upon Saladin, had other enemies he needed to be rid of, and he soon had another occasion to employ the friendly knives of the Assassins. At the court of his master Melic Saleh were two noblemen whose increasing favour and authority threatened to ruin his own. It became a trial of strength—either he had to perish or they; and he bethought him of an admirable device for effecting his purpose. One day as Melic Saleh was starting for the chase, Kumuchtekin placed before

him a blank paper, and requested him to sign it, as he had need of his signature for an affair which admitted of no delay. The young prince did as he was requested, without further question; and Kumuchtekin made use of the signature to cover a letter to Sinan demanding murderers to kill the nobles obnoxious to Kumuchtekin. Sinan—who derived a considerable part of his revenues by the prompt execution of all orders relating to assassination—at once despatched a party of four Assassins to Aleppo. The two nobles were attacked in the street, one was killed, but the other escaped unhurt. Three of the murderers were killed by the populace, the fourth was seized and put to the torture in the presence of Melic Saleh. In the midst of his agonies he cried out, "Why do you torture me, when I have only attempted to execute your orders?" Melic Saleh could not understand this appeal, and wrote to Sinan reproaching him with attempting to lay the guilt of his murders upon his head. Sinan replied by sending him the letter with his signature attached, which requested the murder of the two nobles attacked. The designs of Kumuchtekin were thus discovered; but to plan the murder of a rival is a matter of very small account in an Oriental Court; and the dexterity evinced in the present proceeding served to augment, rather than diminish, the power of Kumuchtekin. Subsequently, however, he fell under his master's displeasure, and was tortured to death.

The order of events now brings us to the famous murder of Conrade of Montferrat, Prince of Tyre and

titular King of Jerusalem. Conrade had two powerful enemies, the Sultan Saladin and Richard of England, and both of them have been accused of procuring his assassination. So far as Richard is concerned, we may dismiss the accusation as unsupported by sufficient evidence. It was thrown into circulation by Philippe Auguste of France, and John of England, when Richard had left the Holy Land and was on his way to England. The motives which induced them to spread abroad this calumny are manifest. Philippe wished to retain his hold on the Norman dominions of Richard; John on his English. They both knew that if once the terrible Crusader set foot within them, they could not stand for a moment before him. But Richard was a captive in the hands of Leopold of Austria—a near relative of the murdered man; and such a charge brought at such a time seemed to be the exact thing required to quicken the recollection of old affronts into a desire for immediate retaliation. The hesitation felt by the Archduke to proceed to extremes against the greatest warrior of the Holy Cross, might be, not improbably, merged in a desire to revenge the murder of a kinsman, on the man who had procured his death. It was exactly the sort of calumny likely to be devised by the astute and unprincipled monarch of France. On the other hand, we may be certain that no Muhammadan historian would sully the fair fame of the great Saladin by attributing such a deed to him unless it was a generally admitted fact. The criminality would not lie so much in the murder itself; but in the making use of so impious an heretic

as an Ismailien Chief in order to effect it. According to Ibn al Athir, Saladin sent to Sinan, requesting him to send emissaries to murder both Richard and Conrade, and pledging himself to pay ten thousand pieces of gold in case he was rid of both enemies. This statement throws rather a lurid light over the Saladin of romance. Sinan, however, did not think it politic to slay the English King. So long as Richard could lead the Red Cross hosts, Saladin had his hands too full of work to menace the safety of the Assassins. But the Grand Master had no scruples about the Marquis, and he was anxious to get the ten thousand pieces of gold; so he sent two of his "Devotees" attired as monks to murder the titular King of Jerusalem. They took up their abode in Tyre, and dwelt there for six months. By an affectation of the most exemplary piety they gained the good will of the ecclesiastics, and Conrade himself conceived such a liking for them that he would never permit them out of his sight. On the 13th day of the second Rebi, A.H. 588 (29th April, 1192), as he was going out to dine with a Bishop, the Assassins attacked and inflicted on him several wounds. One was slain on the spot; the other fled and concealed himself in a neighbouring church. It so chanced that the wounded Marquis was conveyed into this very church to have his hurts attended to; the hidden murderer rushed forth and finished his victim. He was captured and executed. The suspicions attaching to Saladin in connection with this murder are strengthened by the fact, mentioned by Aboulfœda

that when peace was concluded with Richard, four months after the murder of Conrade, Saladin insisted upon a special stipulation to the effect that the lands of the Ismailiens were to be held to come within the terms of the treaty. This, it seems plain, could have been dictated by no other motive than to preserve them from the consequences of an act, which he knew had been instigated by himself. Except on the supposition of some such secret motive, it is impossible to divine why the Sultan should have exhibited so much tenderness towards a ruler who had twice attempted his life. Sinan himself died in the same or the year after Conrade's murder.

But in following out the history of the Order in Syria, we have lost sight of its doings in Persia, and must resume the thread of the story from the death of Kia Buzurgomid, the second Grand Master at Alamut.

"Buzurgomid," writes the orthodox historian, "plunged in error, remained seated on the throne of ignorance, until the year 532 (A.D. 1138), when he was trampled under foot by death, and his body became aliment for the fire of hell." He was succeeded by his son Muhammad, who reigned till the year 557 (A.D. 1162), when, to quote the same historian, he died, and rejoined those unhappy men "whose aim in the present life hath been mistaken, and who deem that what they do is right." "*Verily*," says the Koran, in reference to such men, "*we have got Hell ready as the abode of the infidels.*"

These Grand Masters had all followed the same

policy. To the few only had they revealed the negative and destructive character of their deepest convictions. To the world at large, and to the bulk of their own people, they appeared as rigid Moslems, zealous in the law above their fellows. When Sanjar, the Seljukide Sultan of Khorasan, sent an envoy to Alamut for the express purpose of obtaining authoritative information regarding their secret tenets, the reply was given in a strain of unimpeachable orthodoxy. "Our doctrine," the Sultan was informed, "is as follows—We believe in the unity of God, and consider that only as true wisdom which accords with His word and the commands of the Prophet; we observe these as they are given in the Holy Book of the Koran; we believe in all that the Prophet has taught concerning the creation, and the last day, rewards and punishments, the judgment and the resurrection. To believe this is necessary, and no one is permitted to pass his judgment on God's commands, or even to alter a letter of them. These are the fundamental rules of our sect; and if the Sultan approves them not, he may send one of his theologians to enter into polemical discussions on the subject."

Their conduct was in agreement with this confession of faith. Hasan ibn Sabah, as I have already mentioned, put his son to death because he had been guilty of the offence of drinking wine. When certain of their disciples chose to believe that the "era of the Resurrection" having come, all moral restrictions were abrogated, and gave themselves up to licence and incest, they were pitilessly massacred by order of the

Grand Master. Hasan Sabah and his two successors perceived that a spirit of obedience depended upon the existence of law; and that they must affect to believe in the supremacy of law, unless they desired to destroy its supremacy in the minds of their subjects. The accession of Hasan, the son of Muhammad, is the date of a radical change in this astute and well-considered policy.

Hasan was born A.H. 520 (A.D. 1125). As he grew to manhood, he conceived the desire to make a thorough investigation into the doctrines of his sect. He became remarkable for the extent and depth of his erudition, and the power and eloquence of his expositions. As his father was a man of little learning and of no eloquence, his son appeared, by contrast with him, a man of extraordinary genius. And as the common people were always impatiently awaiting the coming of the Imam to set them free from the tyranny of rites and restrictive laws, they were not long in arriving at the conclusion that this eloquent young man must be the very person whom they were expecting. When Muhammad learned this, he was much troubled. He called a great meeting of his people, and said, "Hasan, whom you see here, is my son, and I am not the Imam, but only one of his missionaries. Whoever does not hear and believe what I say is an infidel, and impious." Then as many as were suspected of believing in the Imamate of Hasan were seized and tortured. Two hundred and fifty were put to death, and a like number expelled from the fortress. The partisans of the young prince were terrified and silenced by these stern proceedings. Hasan himself perceived that his

life was in danger unless he repudiated all connection with these his too zealous followers. This accordingly he did, by cursing them publicly. Nevertheless, in private he drank freely of wine; and this disregard of one of the precepts of Islam, coming to the knowledge of his adherents, confirmed them in their belief that he was the veritable Imam, whose manifestation would abrogate all laws whatsoever. On becoming Grand Master, Hasan lost no time in publicly assuming this character.

In the month Ramadan of the year 559, the inhabitants of the province of Rudbar were collected by his order at the castle of Alamut. On the place of prayers, a pulpit was placed facing towards Mekka, and in the four corners four different flags were planted—a white, a red, a yellow, and a green. On the seventeenth day of the month the people were assembled on this place. Hasan ascended the pulpit, and commenced by involving his hearers in error and confusion by dark and puzzling expressions. He led them to believe that an envoy of the Imam had come to him, and brought an epistle addressed to all Ismailiens, by which the fundamental maxims of the sect were renovated and fortified. He declared that, according to this letter, the gates of mercy and grace were open to all who would follow and obey him; that such were the peculiarly elect; that they were freed from the heavy burdens of the law; and that they were at last brought to the "day of Resurrection"—*i.e.*, the manifestation of the Imam. Upon this he began to recite the prayer which he pretended to have just received

from the Imam. An interpreter, standing at the foot of the pulpit, translated to the audience the following words:—"Hasan, the son of Muhammad, the son of Buzurgomid, is our khalif, to whom all who profess our doctrine are to yield obedience in spiritual as well as temporal affairs, executing his commands, and considering his words as our words. Let them know that our lord has had pity on them, that he has sent for them in his compassion, and has led them to God." Hasan then descended from the pulpit, caused tables to be covered, and commanded the people to give themselves up freely to feasting and merriment, to wine-drinking, gambling, dancing, and every kind of excess, "for to-day," said he, "is the day of the resurrection."

To complete this proceeding, however, and make good Hasan's claim to be the expected Imam, it was necessary to show that, though seemingly a son of the preceding Grand Master, he was, in truth, a lineal descendant of the Fatimide khalifs:—

"The version," says the orthodox historian, Alaeddin Joueiny, "best known, and which enjoys the highest repute, is one, according to which they make no scruple, and have no fear to attribute to him an adulterous origin; for they say unanimously that an Egyptian . . . . one of the confidential slaves of (the Fatimide khalif) Mostansir, visited Hasan ibn Sabah at Alamut in the year 488 (A.D. 1095), and sojourned six months in that place. In the month of Rejeb of the same year (July, 1095), he returned to Egypt. Hasan ibn Sabah had given the most express

orders to treat this man with the greatest consideration, and had himself striven to do so to the utmost of his power. This Egyptian had brought to Alamut, disguised and concealed under a veil of mystery, a grandson of that Nizar (*himself a son of Mostansir*) who is reckoned in the number of their Imams, and this secret he had confided to no one save Hasan ibn Sabah. A residence was provided for this infant at the foot of Mount Alamut. Conformably to the will of the Eternal, according to which it was necessary that the seat of the Imamate should be transferred from Egypt to the country of Deilem, and that the manifestation of that vileness, which they designated *the doctrine of the Resurrection*, should occur at Alamut, this very individual who had been brought from Egypt, or his son, who was born in the neighbourhood of Alamut (for on this point they are not exactly informed), intrigued with the wife of Muhammad, son of Buzurgomid, and she bore a son, Hasan. When the accursed birth of Hasan took place in the house of Muhammad ibn Buzurgomid, Muhammad as well as his disciples supposed that the infant was his son. But Hasan was Imam, and the son of an Imam. This celebrated belief, which all the Ismailiens receive, and which is in their eyes the best and truest, is such that it is based on every kind of disgrace and ignominy. The first consists in saying that a child, whom they acknowledge as their Imam, is the offspring of adultery. . . . . The second ignominy consists in this, that the nature of this despicable genealogy, such as his followers have established it, is opposed to this

Tradition of the Prophet—'The child should be born of a legal marriage; the adulterer should be stoned.' . . . . . Finally, the third turpitude of the Ismailiens, which is their supreme condemnation, and the cause of their chastisement and misery in the world to come, consists in this, that, in order to strengthen this disputed story, they have alleged the example of Prophets sent by God, and have asserted lies regarding these holy men, saying, 'This origin is similar to that of the victim of God, Ishmael, son of Abraham, the friend of God, who was, in reality, the son of the king Malek Esselam, of whom mention is made in the Pentateuch, under the name of Melchisedec.' . . . . In conclusion, the result of this pernicious doctrine, and the final term of this heresy, consists in the affirming, agreeably to the opinion of the philosophers, that the world exists from all eternity, that time is without limits, that the resurrection is purely spiritual. They explain, allegorically, Paradise, Hell, and that which they contain, pretending that these expressions should be received in a sense simply spiritual. Consequently, agreeably to these premisses, they say that the resurrection takes place at the moment when the creature is re-united to God. . . . . This resurrection, which is promised and waited for by all religions and all sects, is that which Hasan has revealed. According to this, all legal burdens are removed from the shoulders of men; for all, at this epoch of the resurrection, ought, in every way, to turn their faces toward God, and repudiate rules, laws, and habits of devo-

tion, the season for which has passed away. It has been commanded in the law, to worship God at five different times in the space of a day and night, and to abandon oneself to Him. According to the Ismailiens, this is a matter of mere form. In the *doctrine of the Resurrection*, it is required to be in heart with God, and to have the soul perpetually inclined towards the Divinity, because this is the veritable prayer. In the same manner, they explain away all the fundamental dogmas of the law, and the precepts of Islam, . . . and destroy almost every distinction between the lawful and the unlawful. Hasan declared, in divers places, either directly or indirectly, that just as during the era of law, any one who did not exhibit piety and devotion, but, according to the doctrine of the Resurrection, regarded piety and devotion as matters purely spiritual, would be put to death by stoning; so also, in the era of the Resurrection, whosoever dared to obey the ordinances of the law, and devoted himself to acts of devotion and the material rites of religion, his chastisement, his death, his lapidation, and his being put to the torture would be matters imperative."

For this development of the Ismailien creed, Hasan received the name of the Lord of the Resurrection, and his followers that of the Sect of the Resurrection. But to emancipate subjects from all restraints of either law or conscience is a dangerous policy for rulers, and four years had hardly elapsed before the incarnate Imam was murdered by his own brother-in-law. Hasan was succeeded by his son Muhammad.

The first act of the new Grand Master was to slay the murderer of his father, together with all his kindred, male and female. Muhammad II. reigned forty-five years; but during this long period there is nothing recorded by the Oriental historians regarding the sect. This silence is a proof that their power in Persia must have dwindled into insignificance. It is manifestly impossible that authority and obedience—the two essential conditions of a state—should co-exist with a scheme of life, allowing every man to do what is right in his own eyes. Consequently, with the accession of Jelalleddin Hasan, the son of Muhammad, an attempt was made to re-establish the foundations of moral order. The new Grand Master set to work to build up at least the outer semblance of orthodoxy. He publicly burned a number of books, which he affirmed to contain the heretical doctrines taught by Hasan ibn Sabah. He caused the Mosques to be rebuilt, and the Muezzin's call to prayer was again heard from the fortresses crowning the summits of the Ismailien hills. The solemn assembly for prayer on Fridays was once more re-established; and the new Grand Master summoned around him readers of the Koran, preachers, scribes, and professors, whom he loaded with honours, and appointed to his newly-built Mosques and colleges. Not content with this, he sent ambassadors to the khalif, and to all the sovereigns of Central Asia and Syria, to assure them that he had abandoned the abominable errors of his fathers, and become a true and faithful follower of the Prophet.

Great changes had taken place in Asia since the death of the first Grand Master. The empire of the Seljukides had vanished, and the great potentate of Asia, now, was the Sultan of Kharezm, who had succeeded, by a series of victorious campaigns, in uniting under his single sceptre the whole of Khorasan and Transoxiana, up to the frontiers of India. He, as well as the khalif, accepted the professions of Jelalleddin; the envoys of the Grand Master were received with distinction; and for the first time since the foundation of the Order, the Grand Master of Alamut was formally admitted into the body of lawful Muhammadan potentates. The Doctors of the Law issued declarations, attesting their belief in the purity and veracity of his professions of faith; and he received the designation of the "New Moslem." To crown all, in the second year of his reign, his mother and wife went on pilgrimage to Mekka. The journey was conducted with an extraordinary degree of magnificence. A banner was borne in front of the procession; and the munificence of Jelalleddin's wife to the crowd of pilgrims exceeded all that had been witnessed for many years.

But just about this time (A.H. 615, A.D. 1214), Moslem Asia was stunned by the most fearful calamity that has ever fallen on the human race—the Mongol invasion. Like the huge wave of some immeasurable cyclone, the human deluge swept over the oases of Bokhara and Khiva, the provinces of Khorasan and Irak, and away to the confines of Russia. Men, paralysed with terror and despair, seemed incapable

of resistance. Here and there the fortifications of some populous city would stay the onward march of the destroying hosts; but only for a moment. And when the invaders passed on, a waste of blackened ruins, cumbered with the corpses of the slain, was all that remained to mark the spot.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FALL OF BAGHDAD.

A.D. 1214—1258.

THE frozen deserts which are, at the present day, included under the name of Siberia, contain one grand lake, whose vast expanse of waters almost entitles it to the appellation of an inland sea. The Lake Baikal is about three hundred miles in length, and fifty in breadth; its waters are sweet and transparent, and abound in fish. There are several floating islands in this lake, which are blown by the wind sometimes to one bank, sometimes to another. The storms that sweep over it are terrible in their violence, rending the ice in pieces even in the depth of winter. The chain of mountains which divide Siberia from the pasture-lands of Mongolia, encircle the waters of the lake. The springs which hurry down their sides, not only fill this huge reservoir, but give rise to all the rivers of North-Eastern Asia. The mountains bristle with huge rocks, in which a few hardy trees have struck their roots, and their summits are covered with eternal ice. At the commencement of the thirteenth century the Mongols fed their flocks in the country south of the Baikal Lake; the branch of the tribe to which

Chengiz Khan belonged dwelling among the mountains of Bourcan Caldoun, where many of the great rivers of Asia have their source. According to the tradition current among them, 2000 years before the birth of Chengiz Khan, the Mongols were assailed and exterminated by the other nations of Tartary. The chief fell in the general massacre; and of all his family the only survivors were his youngest son Kaian, and his nephew Nagos. At the close of the fatal day which witnessed the slaughter of their fellow tribesmen, these two young princes, with their wives, found themselves the prisoners of one man, who conveyed them to his own home. They soon after effected their escape; and returning to the old pasture-lands of their tribe, they took possession of the camels, horses, cows, and sheep, which their conquerors, glutted with plunder, had neglected to carry off. The battle-field was still cumbered with the corpses of the slain, both friend and foe. The young princes collected the clothes and other valuables found upon the dead, and laden with spoil, sought shelter in the mountains. Deep in the recesses of the hills, they came upon a path so narrow that only one man could proceed along it at a time. They ascended this; huge precipitous cliffs rising upon either hand, so that they could barely catch a glimpse of the blue sky above them, until they all at once emerged upon a beautiful and delightful valley, carpeted with verdure, and intersected in every direction with sparkling streams.

In this lovely and inaccessible spot they took up

their abode. They gave it the name of *Erkene-kom*, from *Erkene*, signifying a valley, and *Kom*, a steep mountain. For four hundred years the descendants of the fugitive princes dwelt there; until the valley became incapable of supporting the increasing multitude. It was resolved, at a general assembly of the tribe, to abandon it, and return once more to the old pasture-lands of their fathers. But they sought in vain for the pathway which had conducted the princes thither. At last, however, one of the chief men, who had examined the mountain with attention, discovered a part where the sides of the hill were entirely composed of huge masses of iron. He proposed to put the metal into a state of fusion by the action of intense heat; and for this purpose caused to be conveyed thither a prodigious quantity of firewood. This was charred. The tribe then prepared nine hundred bellows made of the skins of wild oxen, fired the charred wood, and set the bellows to work. In due time the heat became sufficiently intense, and the ore streamed over the hill side in a liquid state. A road sufficient for the passage of a camel was thus thrown open; and the liberated nation went forth, and reoccupied the pasture-lands where their ancestors had dwelt four hundred years before. In memory of this event, the Mongols instituted an annual festival. A piece of iron is made red-hot in a great fire; the Khan of the tribe advances and gives it a blow with a hammer; after him the chiefs and other great men; while the people of each tribe perform the same ceremony among themselves.

At the time the Mongols came forth from Erkenekom, they were ruled by a Khan of the name of Bertezena, a lineal descendant of Kaian. The eighth in descent from this chief left at his death two sons, still children, and a young widow. Although frequently urged to marry again, the widowed Queen declined all such offers, declaring that as Regent it was her duty to devote herself entirely to the interests of the tribe until her sons were old enough to rule. One morning, however, just as day was breaking, she beheld something fall into her apartment through the opening in the centre of the roof. It was brilliant as the sun, and on reaching the ground became transformed into a young man of an orange colour, with eyes of extraordinary beauty. Terror deprived the princess of the power of speech; but she retained her consciousness sufficiently to perceive that the spirit, after remaining with her some time, suddenly vanished. As this adventure was decidedly incredible, she communicated it to no one; the spirit continued his visits; and after the lapse of a brief period, the Queen was discovered to be with child. Her family were furious, and refused altogether to receive the story of the orange-coloured young man as a satisfactory explanation. Guards, however, were placed round her tents to see what truth there might be in her statement. They reported the story of the Queen to be a true one, having themselves witnessed the bright light descending through the aperture in the roof of the tent. All was at once joy and exultation. The widow was regarded as the favoured bride of some super-

natural being; and the offspring of the mysterious connection was awaited with impatience. In due time the Queen was delivered of three sons. Their birth is said to have taken place at the commencement of the tenth century; and their posterity formed many tribes distinguished from other branches of the Mongol race by the appellation "*Niroun*," signifying purity of descent. Chengiz Khan was the eighth descendant in a direct line from Boudantchar—the third of these heaven-born sons. He was born in the year 1155; and is said to have come into the world with a clot of blood clutched in his right hand.

Temoutchin (such was the original name of Chengiz Khan) was left an orphan when only thirteen years of age. The *Niroun* tribes who had given a willing allegiance to his father—a brave and successful warrior—deemed it a degradation to submit to a child. They repudiated his authority; and for many years Temoutchin, with a few faithful followers, led a hunted and perilous existence. More than once the career of the great destroyer seemed to be on the point of ending abruptly. At one time, he was actually a prisoner in the hands of his enemies; on another occasion he was attacked while attended by only two friends. He was struck to the earth and severely wounded; and the courage and devotion of his friends alone preserved his life. At last, however, Temoutchin defeated his enemies in two pitched battles. The last was fought on the banks of the Baldjouna; and the well-wooded country round the battle-field gave Temoutchin an opportunity of displaying that callous

inhumanity for which he has since become so infamous. He caused eighty large cauldrons to be constructed, and placed upon huge piles of wood. They were then filled with water, his prisoners thrown into them, and boiled to death.

This act of cruelty marks a turning point in the career of Temoutchin. From this time (A.D. 1196) until A.D. 1208, with some partial and some severe reverses, he gradually extended his dominion over all the tribes of Mongolia. The last subjugated was that of the Tatars. There was an old feud of long standing between this tribe, and the family of Temoutchin; and the order was given for their utter extermination. Even the women and children were put to the sword. Two of Temoutchin's own wives, who were of Tatar origin, and other ladies who belonged to his generals, tried secretly to save some of the children, but these attempts became known to Temoutchin, and excited his heaviest displeasure. The entire tribe perished, saving a few who saved themselves by flight. This is the tribe which has given its name to all those peoples, differing in origin, language, and appearance, who inhabit the vast regions that we call "Tartary." They dwelt nearest to the Chinese frontier; and the Chinese comprehended under that one name all the tribes that peopled the country to the north of the desert of Gobi. The relations between China and the western nations of Asia carried this name from country to country even to the extremities of Europe, though it was indignantly repudiated by the soldiers of Chengiz Khan, as that of a people they had destroyed.

The nomad nations of Mongol origin were now united under one ruler, and Temoutchin deemed it incumbent upon him to assume a new title commensurate with his dignity and power. He convoked a *couriltai*, or general assembly, near the sources of the river Onan; the chiefs of all the subjugated tribes were required to attend. A magician of great fame then declared that Temoutchin, having destroyed so many sovereigns who bore the title of *Gour Khan*—*i.e.*, Great Khan—could not assume an appellation the lustre of which had been so completely effaced. Heaven had therefore decreed that he should henceforth be called *Chengiz Khan*, or *the Lord of Powers*. This divine revelation was greeted with shouts of applause, and the assembled chiefs at once did homage to their new chief—the Lord of Powers. Chengiz Khan was at this time forty-four years of age.

Some years were still to pass before the great Mongol deluge burst over the verdant valley of Sogdiana, and levelled the cities of Khorasan with the dust. The terrible invasion of China was the next great exploit of Chengiz Khan. There are few more fearful episodes of human suffering to be found in history. In three broad streams the destroying element swept over the northern provinces of China; city and hamlet sunk in ruins before it; the waving harvests disappeared; and the desolated land was cumbered with the corpses of men, women, and children. A vast crowd of captives were dragged along in the rear of the invading hosts, and when Chengiz Khan at length re-crossed the Chinese frontier to

return to his own dominions, the whole wretched multitude of men and women were deliberately slaughtered in cold blood.

The invasion of China was followed by the conquest of Khoten Kashgar and Yarkand; and it was not until A.D. 1218 (A.H. 615) that Chengiz Khan, at the head of a countless host, descended from the bleak uplands of Mongolia into the well-watered regions of the Oxus and the loveliest provinces of Persia. It would be remote from the object of this work, and require far more space than I have at command, to give the particulars of this memorable invasion. Suffice it to say that Bokhara, Samarkand, Merou, Naisapore, Herat—in truth, every great city in the regions of the Oxus and the province of Khorasan were taken and destroyed. The loss of human life is too great for the imagination to grasp. "In less than five years," Vambéry tells us, "the great highroads of Central Asia by which the products of China and India were conveyed to Western Asia and to Europe were deserted; the oases well known for their fertility lay barren and neglected; the trade in arms and jewellery, in silks and enamel, so celebrated throughout Islam, decayed for ever. The towns were in ruins, the peasantry either murdered or compulsorily enrolled in the Mongolian army, and the artisans sent off by thousands to the farthest East to adorn and beautify the home of the conqueror. No less crushing was the blow received by science in the devastation of Central Asia. There is an Arab proverb of the Middle Ages which says, 'Science is a tree whose roots are in

Mekka, but whose fruit ripens in Khorasan.' Judging by the present condition of these countries, such an estimate may well surprise us; but we must not forget that at the most brilliant epoch of civilization in Islamite Asia, Transoxiana played an important part. . . . . The Mongolian invasion put an end to the intellectual life of Central Asia; for although Iran and the West gradually recovered from their misfortunes, Bokhara and Samarkand never regained their former activity, and their intellectual labours were henceforth entirely devoted to casuistry, mysticism, and false religion." *

But the causes which conduced to the marvellous success of the invader, and the utter destruction of the invaded, we do not remember to have seen adequately explained, and it will be well to say a few words about them.

From the earliest periods of history, but especially in the writings of the Jewish Prophets, we catch glimpses of huge swarms of barbarians issuing from the unknown regions of Northern Asia, to break down every fenced city and make the earth waste and desolate. They appear under different names. They are the Medes, "which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it; their bows shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb." They are the Chaldeans, "that bitter and hasty nation which shall march through the land to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs; their horses are swifter than the

* *History of Bokhara*, p. 137.

leopards and more fierce than the evening wolves; they fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat." But it is always out of the North that the scourge of the nations comes, "gathering the captivity as the sand; heaping up earth against every stronghold and taking it;" there is always the same contrast—the fierce, uncorrupted strength of barbarism on the one hand; the weakness and disunion of a sensual civilization on the other. And such were the two elements that came in contact in the days of Chengiz Khân.*

"The Tatars," Paul Carpin tells us, "are obedient to their superiors; they have no quarrels or murders among themselves; they never steal from each other, and are remarkable for a lavish hospitality. They

* The following well-known verses from the Prophecies of Isaiah give a picture of the Mongol invasion which only one of the greatest of the world's poets could have drawn:—

"The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the nations gathered together; the Lord of Hosts mustereth the host of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord, and the weapons of His indignation, to destroy the whole land. Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt, and they shall be afraid; pangs and sorrow shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. . . . . Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword. Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished. . . . . And Babylon (*Baghdad*), the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah."

have great powers of endurance, so that when young they will go without food for one or two days, not only without exhibiting any weakness or impatience, but with as much gaiety as though they were full fed. When on an expedition, they endure the extremes of heat and cold with astonishing patience and resolution. They eat anything they can get; dogs, wolves, foxes, horses, and even human flesh, if nothing else is to be had. On the other hand, they are full of bad qualities; subject to the fiercest passions, and incorrigible liars. They appear very soft and affable at first, but in the end sting like scorpions; they are cunning, deceitful, and always on the watch to overreach others. When they have resolved to inflict injury upon any one, they conceal their design with a subtlety which is exceedingly difficult to penetrate. . . . . In battle, desertion or cowardice is punished with death. Each soldier is expected to have two or three bows, if possible, but certainly one in good condition, with three quivers full of arrows, a hatchet, and cordage to draw the war machines. The richer soldiers have sharp-pointed swords, straight and single-edged only; some also wear helmets and breastplates, and their horses are armed and barbed. They are exceedingly careful of their arms to make them glitter and sparkle. Some also carry lances with the iron crooked at the end to pull an enemy from his saddle; the points of their arrows are sharpened on every side like a sword. They always keep a file in their quiver to sharpen them when needful."

Marco Polo gives some other particulars. When

the service is distant, the Tatars "carry but little with them, and that chiefly what is requisite for their encampment and utensils for cooking. They subsist for the most part upon milk. Each man has on an average eighteen horses and mares. They are provided with small tents made of felt. They can march for ten days without dressing victuals, during which time they subsist upon the blood drawn from their horse, each man opening a vein and drinking from his own cattle. They have milk also dried to a hard paste. This is effected in the following manner:—They boil the milk, skimming off the cream as it rises. The milk is then exposed to the sun until it dries. They carry about ten pounds of this for each man; and of this, every morning, about half a pound is put into a leather bottle with some water. The shaking produced by the movement of their horses makes this into a thin porridge, on which they make their dinner. When the Tatars engage in battle, they never mix with the enemy, but keep hovering about him, discharging their arrows first from one side, then from the other; occasionally pretending to fly, and during their flight shooting their arrows backwards; killing men and horses as if they were combating face to face. In this sort of warfare, the adversary imagines he has gained a victory, when, in fact, he has lost the battle; for the Tatars, observing the mischief they have done him, wheel about, and renewing the fight, overpower his remaining troops and make them prisoners. Their horses are so well broken and so quick upon their feet, that upon the signal given they turn like lightning in

any direction." In these passages we have placed before us the very type and ideal of a horde of savage warriors—their stern military law, their profound instinctive obedience to their chief; their hardihood and courage; their cunning, patience, cruelty, and extraordinary powers of endurance. The hordes of Tatars were, in a word, a terrible machine which worked in obedience to the impulse of a single mind, which had never, to all appearance, been warmed by a transient spark of pity or tenderness. Let us turn now to the other side.

When Chengiz Khan entered Transoxiana, the Sultan of Kharezm was at the head of a splendid-looking army of four hundred thousand men, magnificently appointed and rich in all the pomp and circumstance of war. Unfortunately in its capacity for fighting, it was in every way inferior to the rude enemy it had to encounter. The mother-in-law of the Sultan was sprung from a Turkish tribe in the Caucasus—a wild horde who wandered over the steppes eastward of the Jaik river. She exercised an almost absolute power over her son, and several Kankali chiefs—her near relatives—had entered with their followers into the service of the Sultan. These followers constituted the main strength of his army, and they had on more than one occasion fought with conspicuous courage. The Kankali chiefs stood foremost in the royal favour; they were rulers of cities and governors of provinces. The rest of his army consisted of Turcomans who had formerly fought under the banners of the Seljukides. So long as the

Sultan could carry on an aggressive war, and gratify his lawless soldiery with plunder, the weakness of such an army remained latent. But for purposes of defence they were worse than useless. They had no community of feeling with the people they were expected to defend; they cared nothing for the authority of the Sultan. The Sultan was in truth the slave of his army; and the soldier knew that he was far more needful to the sovereign, than the sovereign was to him. The Kharezmian army was, in a word, a mercenary horde in the most absolute sense of the term, greedy only of plunder, and prepared to join any side which held out the best hopes of it. The first encounter took place in the vicinity of Jund. The Sultan with his whole army came upon a Mongol detachment which had been sent forward to reconnoitre. Despite their small numbers, the Mongols fearlessly attacked the Kharezmian army. They fought with incredible fury, and the desperate bravery of the Sultan's son, Jellaleddin, alone saved the day. When night came on, the Mongols retired in good order and joined the main body. The Sultan was astounded at their invincible pertinacity. He retreated in a panic to Samarkand, where his terror was further augmented by the declaration of the astrologers that the aspects of the heavenly bodies forbade any second trial of arms during the present year. He broke up his army into a number of detachments; scattered them as garrisons in the principal cities; and himself fled into Khorasan. As he rode away from Samarkand, the Sultan passed a crowd of the townspeople,

who were deepening the ditches round the town. "If these people," he said to them, "who are behind us and will shortly be here, were merely to cast their whips into these ditches, they would fill them up in a moment."

This breaking up of the Sultan's army robbed Transoxiana and Khorasan of its one defensive element. The army which, united, had failed to crush a single detachment, was necessarily able to accomplish even less when severed into fragments. Amongst the people there was no power of resistance, nor any capacity for united action. There never is among Oriental communities; and the causes of this imbecility are not difficult to discover. There is in the history of any European, when compared with that of any Muhammadan country, this important difference. In the former we can see political institutions, whether good or bad, rooting themselves firmer and firmer in the common heart of the nation; whereas in the latter, the government never penetrates below the surface. It has no roots; but is rather to be compared to a destructive hurricane passing across the face of the land, uprooting and destroying whatever lies in its path. The great object of an Oriental population is to protect themselves *against* their government; and this they strive to effect by breaking themselves up into small *guilds*, like the village communities of India. Every such section of the people has, if we may use the expression, a distinct life circulating within itself. It intermeddles as little as possible with events that do not disturb its internal

status, recognizing any and every *de facto* government as a necessary calamity which must be propitiated into a certain degree of clemency by the payment of taxes. Under such a state of society, patriotism, as we understand the word, is extinguished; a man's country is the *guild* of which he is a member; and the perilous moment becomes the signal, not for a combined resistance from an angry and awakened nation, but for each little organization to shrink up, hedgehog-like within itself, indifferent to everything but the preservation of its own skin.

This is precisely what happened in Asia at this period. There was not an attempt made to meet the enemy in the field; the thought of combined resistance never so much as suggested itself to anyone. The feeblest efforts to operate upon the rear of the Mongol hosts—to cut off some of the numerous detachments, or to intercept supplies, would have compelled the invaders to hold together, and indefinitely narrowed the area of their devastations. Famine, too, would very soon have driven them back to their native pastures. As it was, the entire open country was given up to them. The Mongols roamed where they would in perfect security. Every town, filled to overflowing with crowds of the peasantry, shut its gates and awaited its doom in panic-stricken isolation. The supineness of the people surpasses belief. They seem to have sat immovable and permitted themselves to be slaughtered. Thus three thousand Mongols marched through Persian Irak, massacred the inhabitants of some half-dozen cities without meeting with any oppo-

sition, though there was an army of about twelve thousand men in the province. "See," says Ibn al Athir, "that which the Tatars did; they did not number more than three thousand, while the Kharezmians had double that number, and the troops of Prince Euzbeg were stronger than both together. In spite of this superiority, the Prince dared not deny their request; the Kharezmians knew not how to defend themselves." "Their request" was that the Kharezmians should be delivered up to them, to which the Prince responded by decapitating a portion of his wretched allies and sending their heads into the Mongol camp, and yielding up the rest alive. The same historian tells us that he heard of a Tatar woman who "entered into a house of Meraga, and slaughtered all whom she found there. They took her for a man. When she had divested herself of her armour, they saw she was a woman, and a Moslem whom she had taken prisoner slew her. I have also heard repeated by a citizen of Meraga that a Tatar entered into a street where more than a hundred people were collected, whom he deliberately slew, one by one, without anyone attempting to defend himself."

This abject prostration of spirit would at times be suddenly replaced by fits of fanatical fury, which, unsupported by any real strength, only maddened the Mongols, and brought down a heavier punishment on the wretched people. The fate of the cities of Merou and Herat may be quoted as illustrations of this.

In the year 1221, Chengiz Khan had established his winter quarters on the banks of the Oxus, sending

his youngest son, Touloui, at the head of 80,000 men, to complete the conquest of Khorasan. Merou was the first city on which the fury of the invaders descended. This place had already tendered its submission to a Mongol army: but, with the blind frenzy characteristic of the Turks, had broken its pledges, massacred a number of Mongol soldiers, and proclaimed its independence. The people were, however, quite unable to refrain from internal dissensions. The city was broken up into a number of factions, and even the approach of Touloui was not sufficient to quench their animosities and induce them to combine against the common enemy. The Mongols obtained possession of the city without a battle. Four hundred artizans and a few children were spared; the residue were put to the sword. Ibn al Athir states that close upon three quarters of a million of men and women perished in this massacre.

From Merou the Mongols marched to Naisapore; from Naisapore to Tous. Both places were carried by storm, and the inhabitants put to the sword. From Tous the destroyers passed on to Herat. As he neared this magnificent city, Touloui sent forward an envoy to assure the people of his protection if they surrendered The Governor rejected the proposal, and put the Mongol envoy to death. Touloui then assaulted the place. But the Governor was a determined soldier, and the garrison brave and numerous. For seven days an almost continuous battle raged round the defences of Herat—the fiercest and bloodiest in which the Mongols had yet been engaged. Seven-

teen hundred of their leading men are said to have fallen in this brief space. But on the eighth day the governor fell dead, transfixed by an arrow; the vigour of the defence immediately waned; dissensions broke out; when at this critical moment, the Mongol prince again offered terms. The extreme loveliness and fertility of the country round Herat, the magnificence of the city, with her clustering domes and minarets ascending above the thick foliage of the encircling groves, is said to have touched even his obdurate heart. He was desirous, if he could, to avert from Herat the doom which had fallen upon Merou and Naisapore. As soon, therefore, as he became aware that there was a party within the city willing to surrender, he rode up to the walls, attended by only two hundred horsemen, and, doffing his helmet, announced that he was Touloui Khan, the son of the King of kings—that he would cease from hostilities, and recommend them to the mercy of his father, if they would pledge themselves to pay to his officers one half of the revenue which had been paid to the kings of Kharezm. The city was yielded up. The Mongol prince kept his word to the citizens; but twelve thousand soldiers were slaughtered in cold blood. A leading citizen was appointed governor of the city, and with him was associated a Mongol officer. Touloui then marched to rejoin his father.

It was only a brief respite which the doomed city had obtained. Not far from Herat was a fortress bearing the name of Kalious, and garrisoned by a number of reckless outlaws. The Mongols had vainly

attempted to reduce it either by storm or blockade. A report was carried to the defenders of this impregnable fortress, that the Heratees had been spared on the condition that they undertook the capture of Kalious. The garrison determined to be beforehand with them. Eight of their number, under a chief noted for his reckless daring, entered Herat disguised as merchants, slew the two governors as they rode alone round the fortifications; and then, rushing through the streets of the city, they raised the cry of "Death to the Mongols!" The infection of excitement ran from man to man with the swiftness characteristic of the Oriental temperament. The Mongol garrison was attacked, and killed to a man; a new governor was elected; and preparations made to defend the city to the last.

Chengiz Khan was beside himself with fury when he heard of the revolt. He discharged the first torrent of his wrath on Touloui, to whose misplaced lenity he attributed this insult to his dignity. His next step was to send a force against the turbulent city, with the stern order to level Herat to the ground, and leave not a single living creature within it. The city was defended with the obstinacy of despair. For more than six months the attacks of the Mongols were successfully repelled. But the besieged became gradually weakened by death, wounds, sickness, and fatigue. The walls began to totter under the blows of the ponderous stones flung from the war-machines of the Mongols. The enemy, too, had run their mines under the outer defences. At length, a part of the

wall fell with a stupendous crash. The Mongols poured in at the gap, one division relieving another. The Heratees fought with desperate valour, and for several days the breach remained unforced. But at last it was carried, and the work of extermination commenced. The massacre and pillage lasted for seven days; and when the Mongols marched away, a waste of smoking ruins was all that remained of Herat. But the tragic drama was not yet finished. The Mongol general advanced a few marches, and then hurried back a detachment of his army to slaughter any survivors who might by this time have emerged from their hiding-places. By this ingenious device, three thousand victims are said to have been added to those already slain. Mirkhond asserts that after this second massacre, a miserable remnant of fifteen persons was all that remained of the population of Herat. They were subsequently joined by twenty-four others. These lived on the dried flesh of the dead, until by exploring the granaries and stables, they obtained seed to raise food for their subsistence.

Here, then, we have the explanation of the Asiatic conquests of the Mongol—on the one side, a huge host of barbarians, strong with all the uncorrupted strength of a savage life; on the other, a population enervated by luxury, honeycombed by religious dissensions, destitute of patriotism, incapable of united action, treacherous and apathetic.

At last, however (A.D. 1223), the deluge subsided; the human inundation ebbed gradually back from the heart of Southern Russia across the oases of Central

Asia, silent now and desolate, and blackened with the ruins of once flourishing cities, into the wild mountain land around Lake Baikal. Fearfuller calamity has never fallen upon much enduring humanity. "The noble cities," says a Persian poet, "they laid as smooth as the palm of the hand; their spacious and lofty structures they levelled with the dust." Multitudes of captives of both sexes and of every age were carried away into Mongolia; hundreds of thousands were ruthlessly slaughtered; at one time Chengiz Khan contemplated the conversion of the whole valley of the Sogd into a vast grazing ground for the flocks of his followers; and he withdrew, leaving only "Sorrow's faded form and Solitude behind."

The two dynasties, however, with whom we are concerned contrived to weather the storm. The khalif still preserved a precarious throne in Baghdad; and the Grand Master of the Assassins still ruled in Alamut. It was not until the reign of Mangou Khan, the third of the successors of Chengiz Khan, that their doom overtook them. And here, as throughout the history of Islam, it was the act of the Moslem himself which involved him in destruction. The seven vials of the wrath of God had been poured out upon Islam; the rivers and fountains had become blood, the land was full of darkness, and men gnawed their tongues for pain. But they repented not of their evil deeds. The same want of unity, the old sectarian animosities, prevailed in Islam after the Mongol invasion, as they had done before. Undeterred by the remembrance of the past, the khalif Mutasim

actually sent ambassadors to Mangou Khan praying him to send an army into Persia to destroy the Assassins. Mangou Khan immediately collected an army, which he placed under the command of his brother Houlagou, whom, on departing, he addressed as follows:—"I send thee, with much cavalry and a strong army from Turan, to Iran, the land of great princes. It is thy duty to observe the laws and ordinances of Chengiz Khan in great things and in small, and to take possession of the countries from the Oxus to the Nile. Assemble round thee the obedient and submissive; but tread into the dust of contempt and misery the refractory and mutinous, with their wives and children. When thou hast done with the Assassins, begin the conquest of Irak. If the khalif of Baghdad comes forward willingly to serve thee, then shalt thou do him no harm, but if he refuse, let him share the fate of the rest." The destruction of the khalifate was the direct result of the embassy from Baghdad.

In the month of the second Joumada (A.H. 650), Kitbouga Noian, a famous Mongol general, quitted the court of Mangou Khan, and preceding the march of Houlagou, advanced against the fortresses of the Ismailiens. Early in the following year he crossed the Oxus, penetrated into Kohistan, and took possession of several places. From that province, with five thousand foot and as many horse, he marched against the fortress of Kirdeh-koh, one of the strongest among the many strongholds possessed by the Assassins. He encircled the place with a deep ditch, and leaving a lieutenant to carry on the siege, carried fire and sword

through the neighbouring country. A successful sally on the part of the garrison of Kirdeh-koh, in which his lieutenant perished, compelled the Mongol general to retrace his steps. Despite, however, of an infectious disease, which greatly thinned their numbers, the garrison obstinately held out. A reinforcement despatched by Alaeddin, the Grand Master, succeeded in effecting an entrance, with only the loss of a single man. The Mongols were reduced to inaction, when at this crisis the Assassins, in true Oriental fashion, succeeded in achieving their own destruction. Alaeddin perished, murdered by his chamberlain at the instigation of his son, Rokneddin Kourshah. Kourshah became Grand Master, and his first act was to put to death the chamberlain, and burn his children in the market-place, for the atrocious crime of murdering a Grand Master. Rokneddin, the last of the Grand Masters, a feeble, cowardly, inexperienced youth, was utterly unable to cope with the difficulties thickening around him. The terrible Houlagou was advancing westward, leaving behind a broad path of smoking ruins and unburied dead. But accidents occasioned long delays, and it was not until A.H. 654 that the Mongol army came in sight of the fort-crowned mountains where reigned the Grand Master of the Assassins. The heart of Rokneddin died away within him at the sight of his enemy. With upwards of a hundred fortresses in his possession well provided with provisions, and incapable of reduction, except by the slow process of blockade, he dared not strike a blow in his defence. A few months elapsed in idle negotiations,

and then Rokneddin surrendered himself a prisoner to the Mongol general, and sent orders to the different garrisons to dismantle their defences. A dynasty which had lasted two hundred years collapsed at last almost without a struggle. A terrible doom fell upon it and its adherents. The order was sent forth that the Ismailiens were to be exterminated; not even the infant at the breast was to be spared. Rokneddin himself was murdered on the banks of the Oxus; his wives, children, sisters, and slaves were massacred in the province of Kasvin. Twelve thousand Ismailiens were slaughtered in one spot by the governor of Khorasan. Parties of Mongol soldiers were despatched through all the provinces wherein the *dais* had proselytised successfully, to extirpate the Assassin out of the land. Numbers of innocent beings, men and women, must have been involved in one common fate with the guilty. The whole race of Kia Buzurgomid, in whose descendants the dignity of Grand Master had become hereditary, were put to the sword; and nothing now intervened between the city of Baghdad and her doom.

Inevitable as death, the Mongolian host moved on. The earth and the heavens were full of fearful sights and great signs, ominous of coming doom.

Most of all were these apparent in the sacred territory which contained the cities of the Prophet. For an entire month, a wondrous flame shone in the sky over against the mountain of Ohod, the dazzling brilliance of which illuminated the recesses of the valleys with an awful splendour. The city of Medina was

shaken by an earthquake; and fearful sounds issued from the centre of the earth, never ceasing, night nor day, from Saturday to Monday. In the valley of the Schada, the ground opened and discharged a torrent of flames mixed with stones and burning coals. The brightness was so intense that all the houses in Medina were illuminated within as by a multitude of lamps; and the light was seen as far as Mekka. The terror-stricken people commenced to free their slaves, to distribute alms, and crowding round the tomb of the Prophet, implored him to intercede for them at the throne of God. Famine desolated Syria. An astonishing flood covered the province of Irak, and the waters did not subside for fifty days. Baghdad was submerged, so that in many parts of the city even the upper stories were under water; and one-half of Irak remained uncultivated. The powers of nature, as at all great crises of this world's history, appeared, by their unusual agitation, to experience a kindred feeling with the sufferings of humanity. It was, in truth, a time of terror and perplexity; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things that were coming upon the earth. More than six hundred years had gone by since the first Arabian khalifs had led their warriors into Syria. As the Jews of old times, the believers in the One God had overthrown fenced cities and destroyed mighty armies. Like them, they had enjoyed their period of probation, their time of earthly splendour; and like them, they had at length been weighed in the balance and found wanting. They had wrought no deliverance upon the

earth; and the decree had gone forth that there was for them no longer either the time or the place for repentance.

The inhabitants of Baghdad, in the meantime, could think of no better way of preparing for the advent of the Mongols than by quarrelling among themselves. The city was divided into two factions: the Shias, who had suddenly acquired a more than usual degree of influence, from the accident of the Vizier Muwaied Ibn Alkami having secretly espoused their tenets; and the orthodox party, headed by a young secretary, Mujahid-eddin Aibek. There were daily fights in the streets; and of course all sorts of bad characters took advantage of the disorders to render life and property utterly insecure. The anarchy in Baghdad went on from bad to worse; both leaders sought to work upon the fears of the khalif and gain him as an ally. The secretary insisted upon the duty incumbent upon the Commander of the Faithful to suppress the Shia heresy whenever it showed its head; the vizier represented his rival as a secret conspirator against the life of the khalif. The Commander of the Faithful was not easily roused to action. In the seclusion of his harem, surrounded by seven hundred wives, and attended by one thousand eunuchs—never but for one day in the year coming in contact with the world outside of his palace walls, the clamour of the faction fights in the streets of Baghdad sounded faint and thin, like voices in a dream. Wars and revolutions fall upon his unheeding ear like the buzz of an unknown language. The walls of his

palace enclosed not merely the world of his thoughts; they contained the only world he knew at all. With absolute power over the lives of all who came in contact with him; with every whim supplied the moment it was expressed; knowing nothing of men except from the obsequious slaves that thronged around him; the object of the adoration and awe of millions of hearts, the khalifs passed their lives in a species of fantastic dream. They became gods in their own estimation, and the passions and turmoil of humanity fell upon their ears "like a tale of little meaning though the words be strong." The mind of Mutasim—the last of the Abbasides—had, so to speak, completely lost its apprehension of the realities of the world, and it was an almost impossible task to bring them home to him. At length, however, he caused a letter to be written, declaring the secretary to be a most loyal and excellent servant of the state, and all who thought otherwise to be liars and calumniators; he caused him to be clothed in a robe of honour, and his name to be inserted in the public prayer immediately after his own. The disappointed vizier vowed vengeance. Baghdad might be destroyed; the people might fall victims to the swords of the Mongols—what cared he? Vengeance on the khalif and on his insolent favourite the secretary he was resolved to have, be the consequences what they might. He at once placed himself in secret communication with Houlagou, urging him to advance upon Baghdad, and promising to do his utmost to deliver the city into his hands. He then persuaded the infatuated khalif to

disband a great portion of the standing army, in order to save their pay and preserve his treasure; he pointed out to the khalif that, as the Lieutenant of the Prophet, he was in a special sense under the Divine protection, and needed not, as ordinary mortals, to trust to the arm of flesh; he recalled to his mind that all the great Asiatic conquerors had bowed in homage before the spiritual Lord of Islam, and that beyond a doubt Houlagou the Mongol would be as Mahmoud of Ghuznee and Togrul Beg the Seljuk. In the meanwhile, an embassy had arrived from Houlagou. "Probably," he wrote, "you have heard by universal rumour of the punishments which the Mongolian armies have inflicted upon the people of this country; the humiliation and destruction which have overtaken the kings of the East, thanks to the aid of the eternal God. The gates of Baghdad have never been closed against any of these sovereigns, who have, one and all, established their dominion there. How then can they remain closed against us who have done such things?" He went on to warn the khalif to learn wisdom while there was yet time. If he surrendered, all would be well with him; but if not—"I will in my just anger conduct my troops to Baghdad, and not leave a living soul in your country. Your towns, your lands, and your province shall be wasted with flame." The khalif returned a haughty reply. He reproached Houlagou for the arrogance which assumed that he was master of the world's destinies, because he had enjoyed a brief period of success. He supposed that Houlagou was unaware that a vast host of believers

from the rising to the setting sun were obedient, as slaves, to the mandates of the khalif—that these would at a word gather around him in invincible strength—that having destroyed the insolent invader, who had presumed to enter Iran, it was his intention to march into Turan and put down the upstarts who had usurped dominion there. But, the khalif added, he was not greedy of blood-shedding, and if Houlagou retired quietly out of Khorasan, the past should be forgotten and forgiven. Houlagou shook with rage when this message was communicated to him. He sent word to the khalif that he was in full march upon Baghdad with an army as innumerable as ants, and that he (the khalif) had nothing now but fierce battles to look for.

Great was the consternation in Baghdad when this message was received; but the khalif, confident of a Divine interposition in his favour, could be roused to no other measure of defence than an embassy to Houlagou, threatening him with the wrath of God if he persisted in his impious attempt against the House of Abbas. The Mongol host, meanwhile, moved steadily forward; as they approached the devoted city they threw off to right and left two large detachments to encircle and complete its investment on the further side. Houlagou retained command of the main body and advanced direct upon Baghdad by way of Kermanshah and Hulwan. At Dinawer he was met by another embassy from the khalif, offering to pay a yearly tribute if Houlagou would stay his advance. This proposal was rejected. On the 9th

Mohurrum, A.H. 656, the advanced guard of Houlagou's army came in contact with the Baghdad troops, who drove them back, after a smart skirmish. The next day, however, the main body having come up, a second battle was fought, and the Muhammadan troops utterly beaten, fled in confusion to Baghdad. By the 11th day of Mohurrum, the three armies advancing from three sides completely invested the doomed city. About this time the three presidents of the descendants of Ali, who resided at Hillah, not far from the ruins of Babylon, sent a letter to Houlagou, tendering their submission, and complaining bitterly of the trials and persecution they had endured at the hands of the Abbasides. They added that they now hoped for relief, because from a Tradition preserved by Ali, the ever-victorious Lion of God, they knew that the fall of Baghdad was at hand. Houlagou was greatly pleased at the intelligence of this prophecy, and sent a detachment of his army to take possession of the district and preserve the inhabitants from violence.

The siege, in the meanwhile, had been pressed with relentless vigour. On every spot of commanding ground without the city projectile engines were planted which threw masses of rock and flaming naphtha. Houlagou had brought with him a corps of Chinese fire-work makers, who were specially skilled in the construction and management of these engines. For six days the walls were battered without ceasing, and the city set on fire in various places. Attempts, too, were made to divide the inhabitants among themselves. Missives were shot into the city, declaring that the

adherents of Ali had nothing to fear. On Friday, 25th Mohurrum, the Persian tower crumbled into pieces; on the following Monday the Mongols stormed the breach. On the same night the defences on the eastern side were carried by assault. Boats were then collected to form a floating bridge across the Tigris; and ten thousand men were stationed on the roads leading to Medain and Basra to capture any of the inhabitants who sought to escape. Embassy after embassy was now despatched by the terrified khalif to implore the clemency of the Mongol chief, but they returned without effecting anything. At last the khalif sent his eldest son, and Houlagou so far relented as to send officers to negociate with the khalif. Active operations were for awhile suspended. But the negociations were still incomplete, when a chance arrow slightly wounded Houlagou himself. Mad with rage, he determined that the whole city should suffer a fearful retribution for the injury done to himself. He ordered a renegade Muhammadan to proceed to the principal gate of the city, and proclaim that all who came forth, and surrendered themselves to Houlagou would receive pardon and mercy. The inhabitants pressed out by thousands.

They were divided into parties of ten, and hacked to pieces by the Mongol soldiery. The secretary, Mujahid-eddin, perished in this massacre, and Suleiman Shah, the chief general of the Muhammadan army, together with seven hundred of his relatives. The khalif, in despair, turned to the treacherous Ibn Alkami for counsel and assistance. "Nothing," replied

the vizier, "can be done now; the sword is sharpened, and already poised in air for the fatal stroke." At last the khalif, desperate of any other chance of saving his life, determined to throw himself on the mercy of the conqueror. On the 4th of the month Safar, A.H. 656, he came forth from the beleaguered city, attended by his brother and two sons, and a train of three thousand of the principal men of Baghdad—the Syuds, Khatibs, Kadis, and principal Ministers of State. Houlagou received the fallen monarch with an appearance of kindness, asking him only to proclaim to the armed inhabitants of the city that they should throw aside their weapons and assemble before the gates in order that a general census might be taken. The order was given and obeyed; the Muhammadan soldiery crowded into the Mongol camps, and were ruthlessly massacred. The city now lay naked and defenceless, and the savage Mongol might revel in the fierce delight of blood-shedding in absolute security. The investment round the city precluded the possibility of escape. By the orders of Houlagou, the ditches were filled up and the outer walls thrown down; and then from every side the Mongols were permitted to pour in. The inhabitants were devoted to the sword; the city to pillage and to fire. On Saturday, the 7th of Safar, the work commenced. The city was gradually consumed by flame; the streets ran with blood; the libraries of the learned were either flung into the fire, or the waters of the Tigris; and so great a quantity of Persian and Chinese gold tissues, Arab horses, Egyptian mules, Greek and Abyssinian slaves of both sexes, gold,

silver, and precious stones, was found, that the private soldier became richer than even the chiefs of the army had been before.

A tent in the meanwhile had been pitched for the accommodation of the khalif and his sons. The pillage and massacre had gone on for two days, but the advancing tide of destruction had not yet reached the vast and magnificent structure where the Commanders of the Faithful had lived and reigned. On the 9th of Safar, Houlagou entered and took up his abode there. He made a great feast for a thousand of his lords. The khalif was brought before them. "It is you," said the Mongol, with mock politeness, "who ought to receive us, for we are your guests. Come and let us see what worthy thing you have to give us." The khalif broke open his treasure-chests, and displayed two thousand suits of clothes, ten thousand pieces of gold, and an immense number of jewels and precious stones. Houlagou Khan flung them contemptuously to his officers. "These," he said, "any one may find and rob you of. But where are your hid treasures?" Then, under the direction of the khalif, they dug beneath the floor of the great state-room of the palace; presently they came upon a huge cistern filled to the brim with ingots of gold. Houlagou had plates filled with this gold and placed before Mutasim instead of food; and on the khalif's observing that gold was not food, the Mongol replied, "Because it is not food, and cannot preserve life, why did you not give it to thine army to defend thee, or to mine to pacify them?" The next evening Houlagou returned to his camp. "The

riches," says the Persian panegyrist of this monster, "that the khalifs had amassed during five hundred years were heaped up like mountains round the tent of the prince." Then the work of destruction recommenced. Dome and minaret, palace and tower came crashing down as the advancing flames licked up supporting beam and rafter. The mosque and palace of the khalifs, the musjid of Mousa Jewad; the tombs wherein reposed the mortal remains of the heads of Islam—in a word, all the great buildings of the city, were utterly consumed. The streets became a shapeless wilderness of ruins; nothing escaped except a few sheds belonging to some cowherds. The work of slaughter kept pace with that of conflagration; the river, according to the expression of the Persian historian, flowed as red as the Nile when Moses, by a miracle, changed its waters into blood. The stench of the dead bodies became so frightful that even the callous sensibilities of Houlagou Khan were unable to endure it. He left the vicinity of the wasted city, and established his residence at the villages of Wakf and Jelabieh. There, on the 14th Ṣafar, A.H. 656, the khalif, his sons, and five eunuchs who had never quitted their master, were put to death. "On the morrow," continues the historian, Rashideddin, "all those who had accompanied the khalif when he left the city by the gate of Kalwaza also received the crown of martyrdom. They slaughtered without pity all they could find of the House of Abbas; there escaped only a few who were held of no account."

# SUCCESSION OF THE FIFTY-FOUR KHALIFS

FROM

## THE DEATH OF MUHAMMAD TO THE DESTRUCTION OF BAGHDAD.

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| THE "RIGHTLY-DIRECTED" KHALIFS. | A.D. |
|---|---|
| Abou Bekr | 632 |
| Omar | 634 |
| Othman | 644 |
| Ali | 656 |

| KHALIFS OF THE HOUSE OF OMMAYA. | |
|---|---|
| Muawia | 661 |
| Yezid (son of Muawia) | 680 |
| Muawia II. (son of Yezid) | 683 |
| Merwan I. | 683 |
| Abd al Malek (son of Merwan) | 685 |
| Sons of Abd al Malek — Walid | 705 |
| Sons of Abd al Malek — Sulaiman | 715 |
| Omar ibn Abd al Aziz | 717 |
| Yezid II. (son of Abd al Malek) | 720 |
| Hisham (ditto ditto) | 724 |
| Walid II. (son of Yezid II.) | 743 |
| Yezid III. (son of Walid I.) | 744 |
| Merwan II. | 744 |

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| KHALIFS OF THE HOUSE OF ABBAS. | |
|---|---|
| THE PERIOD OF PERSIAN ASCENDANCY. | |
| Abdallah as Saffah | 750 |
| Abou Jaafar al Mansour (brother of as Saffah) | 754 |
| Muhammad al Mehdi (son of al Mansour) | 775 |
| Sons of al Medhi — Musa al Hadi | 785 |
| Sons of al Medhi — Haroun al Rashid | 786 |

| | | A.D. |
|---|---|---|
| Sons of Haroun al Rashid | Muhammad al Emin | 809 |
| | Abdallah al Mamoun | 813 |
| | Kasim al Mutasim | 833 |
| Sons of Kasim al Mutasim | Haroun al Wathik | 842 |
| | Jaafar al Mutawakhil | 847 |

During the Tyranny of the Turkish Bodyguard.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Muhammad al Muntasir (son of al Mutawakhil) | 861 |
| | Ahmed al Mustain | 862 |
| | Muhammad al Mutaz (son of al Mutawakhil) | 866 |
| | Muhammad al Muhtadi (son of al Wathik) | 869 |
| | Ahmed al Mutamid (son of al Mutawakhil) | 870 |
| | Ahmed al Mutadhid (nephew of predecessor) | 892 |
| Sons of al Mutadhid | Ali al Muktafi | 902 |
| | Jaafar al Muktadir | 907 |
| | Muhammad al Kahir. | 932 |
| Sons of al Muktadir | Ahmed al Rhadi | 934 |
| | Ibrahim al Muttaki. | 940 |

During the Ascendancy of the Bouide Princes.

| | |
|---|---|
| Almufadhl al Moti (son of al Muktadir) | 944 |
| Abd al Kerim at-Taji (son of al Moti) | 974 |
| Ahmed al Kadir (son of predecessor) | 992 |
| Abdallah al Kaim (son of predecessor) | 1031 |

From Rise of the Seljuks to Destruction of Baghdad.

| | |
|---|---|
| Muhammad al Muktadi (son of predecessor) | 1071 |
| Ahmed al Mustazhir ( „ ) | 1094 |
| Fadhl al Mostarshed ( „ ) | 1118 |
| Mansour al Rashid ( „ ) | 1119 |
| Muhammad al Muktafi (son of al Mustazhir) | 1119 |
| Yusuf al Mustanjid (son of predecessor) | 1160 |
| Alhasan al Mustadhi ( „ ) | 1170 |
| Ahmed al Nasir ( „ ) | 1180 |
| Muhammad Az-zahir. ( „ ) | 1225 |
| Abou Jaafar al Mustanzir( „ ) | 1226 |
| Abdallah al Mutasim ( „ ) | 1242 |
| Destruction of Baghdad | 1258 |

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